CHAPTER VIII

THE EMERGENT VISION
In an age when critics have devised far more sophisticated instruments for the anatomical survey of literature, to uphold character, plot or setting as the structural element appears at once dated. This chapter is an afterword to recover lost ground. It is an attempt to recast the image of nature in the works of Faulkner in order to evaluate its acceptability in the modern context. In his novels, the reader is constantly confronted with a sense of nature, most conspicuously in the form of the natural scene. This has led most of his critics to conclude that nature poses itself as the norm for the human condition. And yet the twentieth century concern with space technology, almost immediately, renders obsolete such a categorical use of nature. Faulkner's writings came at a time when the thinkers of the age were crossed on the dialectics of reality. The polarity arose from the naturalistic pledge to truth in experience and the neo-romanticist commitment to truth in apprehension. Critics of Faulkner are left groping for the philosophy that resuscitates his art. His concern with the consciousness and the projection of the backdrop as a symbolic extension appears diametrically opposed to his preoccupation with the process of dehumanization in man and nature. The tendency
in the past has been to affirm the excellence of Faulkner's depiction of nature by drawing conceptual analogies between him and the earlier American stalwarts—such as the reading of that introspective gloom of Hawthorne into Faulkner's presentation of forest scenes; or by tracing the intellectual link between Melville's metaphysics and that of Faulkner's; or even by establishing thematic connections between Twain's Mississippi voyage and The Bear rites, and the roles of Huck Finn and Ike McCaslin. None of these analogies could be pursued extensively for they failed to yield any deep insights into Faulkner's idea of nature, and critics soon took refuge in acclaiming him as one of the greatest myth-makers of the day. The potency which the word 'myth' bore in the early twenties encouraged critics to stretch its context to cover most of contemporary writings. But the state of impasse which the word has reached during the present times, impels us to review the literature of that period in a new light. The purpose of this thesis has not been to establish the authenticity of Faulkner's idea of nature. It is an attempt to redefine his image of nature in the context of the present age. It calls for a devaluation of the moral content and a greater involvement in artistic expression. Most of what is
seen as nature in Faulkner's novels is a partial view for it percolates through the consciousness from the individual's exposure to phenomena. The whole vision is implied in the man and nature configurations.

The coupling of nature and art has been a literary heritage since the Renaissance. But with the displacement of traditional ethics, the association between art and nature has been reduced from one of necessity to one of convenience. Nature has been assigned a second place ever since the literary guardians of Europe had initiated the move of art for art's sake. A chronological study of twentieth century writing witnesses the gradual effacement of the natural setting. This trend does not indicate a facile disposal of nature but a reconditioning of its image which in actuality provides it with greater significance. Mary McCarthy in a survey of landscapes in novels of the present century, suggests a redefinition of the term 'nature' as necessary for an appreciation of the innate contradiction in contemporary living. She claims nature to be truly existing in 'an instant reverberant in time' when man realizes his own isolation while caught in communion with eternity, for to the modern man 'nature is not just the circumambient ensemble of
non-human life but history on a grand scale - duration''. The contradiction lies in the fact that while the common man veers toward a back to nature program in the demands for "'nature-foods'" "'nature-cures'" and "'natural childbirth'", the literature of today reveals the artist's striving to minimise the ethical content of nature, for the terms "'natural'" and "'unnatural'" have ceased to have any significance as attributives. Any use of nature in post-Bergsonian literature cannot be accounted for without a reference to the artist's engagement in time. Though Mary McCarthy makes the distinction between the treatment of nature in the past and the present, she fails to qualify the varying quantum's of human response to time. She telescopes all the images of nature into one, "'promise of eternity'", "'history on a grand scale'", or "'duration'", and all responses into a single "'sense of being in the presence of something greater than ourselves: larger, more perduring, grander'". Her view does not account for mutability in the state of nature and in man's responses to time in nature. Art in the twentieth century concerns itself with the quantitative rather than the qualitative, and the creative skill lies in the nuances of the I - It relationship. This study infers that Faulkner's

preoccupation with time revitalizes his image of nature. It is the flux of time that provides his nature projections with a dynamic form. It would be inaccurate to define the sense of nature in Faulkner's novels to be a "sense of being in the presence of something greater"; the varied textures of experience suggest nature to be a sense of time. In his works nature is not limited to the representation of "history on a grand scale". At one level the landscape provides a surface continuity for man and nature interactions take place in temporal sequence. But the implications probe further for nature is simultaneously used to denote a condition of stasis or a timeless moment in existence.

The French critics were among the first to isolate Faulkner from the American tradition and to claim him to be more modern than the rest of his contemporaries. He was hailed for the way in which he manipulated time to resonate with the ephemeral and the intrinsic in experience. Unfortunately the French litterateurs tended to regard with suspicion any work which did not conform to their creed. Their appraisal of Faulkner's novels did not yield very satisfactory results, for some novels proved to be more existentialist than others. Though Sartre applauded the American's stylistics, he chose to disregard the artistic vision, for he concluded thus:
I like his art, but I do not believe in his metaphysics. A closed future is still a future. According to Sartre, in the works of Faulkner and Proust, time stands "decapitated" of the future. In his discussion of Faulkner, he limits himself to the earlier works. Sartre's estimate does not seem quite pertinent with reference to Faulkner's maturing vision. Jean Pouillon suggests that the distinction between Proust and Faulkner lies in Proust's evocation of chronological time to gauge the authenticity of time recaptured, whereas Faulkner's is a total submergence in personal time. Pouillon points out that the dramatic moment of analysis in Proust arises from a confrontation between subjective reality and objective reality, while in Faulkner the conflict lies between a state of consciousness which is an inevitability and that of knowledge "only a possibility". Though Pouillon is at pains to point out that the individual's knowledge of destiny is psychologically deterministic, there appears to certain discrepancy, for any state of knowledge as apart from no-knowledge infers an awareness of other levels of time outside the personal realm. On one


Faulkner criticism owes a tremendous debt to the eminent French philosopher-writers for opening up new areas of speculative interests. The French sought to place Faulkner’s writing in one of the isms for as Sartre put it, they believed that, "a fictional technique always relates back to the novelist’s metaphysics". Though their claim to the relevance of time in the Faulknerian vision was justified, their central thesis regarding the detemporalization of the present and the future seemed suspect. Of the French critics, Albert Camus came closest to a sensitive appreciation of the Southern novelists when he held that what appealed to him most in their books was "'the dust and the heat'" and he placed Faulkner among "'the rare creators of the West'". I believe that Camus' reference to "'the dust and the heat'" bears a greater significance than appears on the surface. It not only adequately describes the very fabric of life in the South but also contains the essence of human existence caught in conflict between the spatial and the temporal within the dual process of externalising and internalizing reality.

With the accent placed on artifice, the more recent reviewers of Faulkner show a greater preoccupation with the writer’s innovation in art forms. Most critics agree that Joyce, through the use of the mythic mode had indicated the most effective means of destroying chronology and for

133. Albert Camus, from a letter in Harvard Advocate GXXXV:2 (November 1951) p.21
Faulkner the South, its people, its tradition and its geography provided an enticement for the inception of this form. C Hugh Holman, in a study of the three most representative writers of the three distinct regions of the South, establishes that the mimetic quality of writing common to all is a heritage of the Southern literary tradition. He isolates the three writers by their stylistic mode which in Ellen Glasgow he sees as naturalistic, in Faulkner as mythic and Thomas Wolfe as epic. His approach in relating the writer to his region seems justified to an extent. But the connection between myth and the Delta region is too mechanical to account for the complexity of Faulkner's vision which appears to transport his evocations of man and nature beyond the mythic locale. Holman fails to point out that myth in Faulkner is not superimposed on the source to give it a structural finish but that myth is a controlling agent in setting the pace for a particular response in time. Any discussion of the use of myth in Faulkner inevitably includes references to nature rituals as in The Bear. And yet to conclude that his treatment of nature is mythic is to underrate the artist's cognition of the outside forces.

If his theme of primitivism could be identified by an alignment with the mythic view of life, one would be justified in claiming that the author tilts the balance in favour of those characters who live in communion with nature. Melvin Backman in a study of the theme as a pattern in the novels tends to oversimplify Faulkner's art. His view is that primitivism in his works lacks philosophical base and that it functions "primarily as an unexamined idealization set against the sick protagonists". Such an estimate dispenses too easily with the artist's thought and the assumption that the primitives are those "who are free from enervating inner conflicts and who pursue simple direct lives" is far too categorical. Faulkner's primitivism is not merely a device for posing an idealized state in contrast to the modern malaise. It appears as an element integral to the human condition. The primitive in man is in a constant state of flux for it is a response governed by impulses. The hunt image is used by Faulkner to present primitivism as a force counter to the process of individuation. A scrutiny of the hunt as experience and metaphor reveals that the author explores this image to project a tension in time in recurring patterns of continuity and crises. The

Reference to myth is not for an endorsement of the eternal return, nor for an elevation of the individual in martyrdom. Myth provides an added temporal perspective and the process of individuation is generated by a disengagement from the cyclic image of life. The individual response is determined not by the quality of intensity but by the extent of awareness of his own niche in time. In Faulkner's novels the hunt is used to project the elemental as an active latent force endemic to man's experience in time. His mythic evocation of fertility in the female highlights the antithetical posture of the doomed and the damned. The myth of Diana and the myth of Persephone are not used to represent the innate fertility of the female condition. The study of females in Faulkner's novels shows that myths do not govern a deterministic condition of doomed and damned. The myths are used to explore degrees of response to fertility. The doomed are those individuals evoked in stasis, who choose to abandon themselves to the mythic in time. The damned acquire a stature of dignity in their effort to repudiate time and to sublimate creativity. Though the landscape in Faulkner's novels is projected in refracted images, the artistic purpose of myth does not appear to lie in the simulation of an organic unity in nature. For Faulkner, man's experience in nature seems to be a
revocation of myth in its liberation from the communal response. Man and nature portrayals in the four novels essentially nature-based reveal that the experience does not terminate in the individual's transcendence from a state of consciousness to a state of knowledge as Pouillon asserts. If Faulkner's vision terminated at this point, one wonders why The Bear legend goes beyond the spectacular ritual of the bear kill. Section IV of The Bear story fortifies theme with a dialectics that Melvin Backman appears to disregard in his formula of sickness and primitivism.

Among Faulkner critics, the earlier school concerned themselves with the metaphysics of his work. But they failed to grapple with the essence of his art and settled for a compromise in the claim that there is a "conflict between humanism and naturalism" in his novels. Robert Penn Warren, though conscious of artistry in Faulkner's landscapes, reduces the function of nature to "a backdrop for human action and passion". In an assay to redeem Faulkner's humanism he asserts that the novelist centres on "the human effort to break out of the mechanical round of experience at the merely 'natural level'". Penn Warren's estimate seems limited.


for it fails to account for the unique in Faulkner's brand of humanism. His sophisticated metaphysics probes beyond the image of extorsion in nature with man at the centre. In his novels man and nature are not delineated in isolation as entities, but are projected as permutative states and the axis lies not in communion but in communication. Post-Bergsonian literature indicates that the idealization of the individual and his environment has given place to a new preoccupation with the aesthetics of experience, spurred by a sharpened awareness of the space-time field. Man and nature configurations in Faulkner's works reveal that his concern lies beyond the realm of the human condition. His nature portrayals are dynamic and therefore any attempt to identify them by earlier definitions as the mirror-image or as a revelatory force yields unsatisfactory results. He undoubtedly surpasses most of the American writers of his age in the use of spatial and temporal dimensions. So far most Faulkner criticism has shied away from a direct confrontation with the artist's vision of existence. While radical critics have strained to identify his view with the humanistic tradition, which invariably tends to make his art appear schematic, the rest have chosen to divert the critical focus to his stylistics without having clarified his stance.
This chapter intends to highlight Faulkner's sense of nature as the unique feature of his art. The experimentation with form or the probe into the inner recesses of the consciousness were in themselves characteristics of the modern temper. The tendency in twentieth century American fiction is to regard the earlier generation's articulations regarding nature as self-conscious and adolescent. R.W.B. Lewis terms the contemporary scene as The Age of Containment which shuns any exposure to nature or to experience and from this state of literary enervation he singles out Faulkner's *The Bear* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as exemplars of ''an occasional vitality in American fiction''. He estimates that the success of *The Bear* which he regards as the author's finest work lies in the ''The hero's achievement of conscience and the author's achievement of drama both result from the application of imagination to old and familiar materials''.

Though Lewis does not elaborate on, ''the application of imagination to old and familiar materials'', his assessment of the creative process in Faulkner suggests a revised approach. The most outstanding feature is the constant assimilation of the old with the new which invariably contributes to a transformed image of life. Though his source remains essentially legendary, in projection the

reliance is not on representation but on discovery. John Bayley in a comparative study of literature past and present remarks that:

... the complex kinds of traditional authority that Nature implies were specifically disowned by the American idea and left out of the American dream. For America, Nature had to become the Human Condition. Though his account seems to be relevant, the inclusion of Faulkner among Hemingway, Fitzgerald and O'Hara, seems rash. Any placing of Faulkner amongst his contemporaries demands that a line must be drawn between the use of nature in *The Bear* or *Intruder in the Dust* and nature as it appears to us in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* or Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea*. In Hemingway the physical environment is shaped to offset an innate pride in human endeavour. As the drama unfolds in a magnificent confrontation between the veteran fisherman and the monstrous whale, the principal line of vision does not deter in its focus on the old man. Even in death the honour remains his, for he believes that "a man can be destroyed but not defeated". Here the conflict remains at the level of consciousness in its encounter with objective reality, as it springs from

other-directed forces. In Faulkner, nature is projected in dual vision as objective reality in the cyclic image of eternity on which is superimposed the subjective in linear form. The identification of the bear with the wilderness as the image of immortality is acceptable only up to a point; this convergence lies only in a single perspective. In the destruction of the wilderness and the killing of the bear, the image of nature appears fragmented in the dialectics of truth, not posed against beauty but placed in time. The image of nature, in *Intruder in the Dust*, acquires greater complexity for Chick's pine experience is synchronised with his confrontations with Lucas. The psychic landscape in the shifting scene of the community extends into the quantitative areas of experience. Since the conflict in Hemingway is other-directed, his vision of life rests on the old brand of humanism. In Faulkner's novels the conflict is self-directed and dialectical as the experience in nature is internalised. If one were to follow the direction of his imaginative apprehension, it appears as in Camus, to be a striving toward an 'anonymous humanism'. The term 'anonymous humanism' as used by Wylie Sypher with reference to Camus, is

applicable to Faulkner's metaphysics. What isolates Faulkner from his contemporaries as Camus from his fellow existentialists is the image of the individual, as homogenous with the whole and yet recognisable as the One among many.

In order to relate the idea of an "anonymous humanism" to Faulkner's art it is necessary to review the four major man-in-nature works in chronological perspective. The only kind of pattern that can be imposed on his image of man and nature is the polarity in the states of immutability and flux. Change is endemic to the condition of man and nature for both have been subject to the forces of socialisation; what remains in the posture of immutability is the hierarchy of responses which consistently resists dehumanization. Erich Neumann defines the direction of modern art as a reaching toward a universal humanism which is a dynamic off-shoot of the conflict between the process of individuation and the assimilation of the cultural canon in the collective unconscious. His comment on the recent trend appears remarkably relevant to Faulkner's art:

Our conception of man is beginning to change. Up to now we saw him chiefly in a historical or horizontal perspective, embedded in his group, his time, and his
cultural canon, and determined by his position in the 
world — that is, in his particular epoch. There is 
truth in this vision, no doubt, but today we are 
beginning to see man in a new perspective — vertically — 
in his relation to the absolute. 141

The motif as it appears in the image of Old Ben or 
Lucas is the compressed form of this vertical stance 
projected in abstraction. The man and nature 
configuration has shifted from the image of the cyclic 
on the temporal to the spiral on the horizontal. The 
constant in the horizontal represents continuity, the 
personal being located in the changing one. This appears 
as a recurring stance in the form of a motif, while the 
movement is the rendition of the mental synthesis through 
varying levels of time. Hoffman in a treatment of time 
in Faulkner states:

While a literal, lineal time has no place of 
appreciable significance in Faulkner's work, the pressure 
of past upon present is seen in a variety of complex 
and interesting ways as affecting the psychology and 
morality of individual actions. 142

This definition which Hoffman himself modestly regards 
as an "oversimplification" fails to account for the

141. Erich Neumann, ed. et al. 'Art and Time', Man 
and Time: Papers From the Eranos Yearbooks, trans. 
pp.3-37.

142. Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (Twayne Pub., 
intricacy of time engagement in Faulkner's depiction of nature. Among the various segmentations of the past that Hoffman reads into the novels, the only category which seems applicable to all of nature in Faulkner is the Edenic time, for it appears as "pre-historical or a non-historical time, or a non-temporal existence, a point before or beyond time, when active moral criteria either have not yet entered human history or are not really contained within the consciousness". With reference to The Bear, if Old Ben, the wilderness, and the hunt-ritual were to be telescoped into a single image of the Edenic Past, then one wonders why the story would continue beyond the tableau when Ike actually confronts the bear on abandoning the watch, the compass and the rifle, except perhaps merely to fulfill the requirements of the hunt. This definition of "Edenic time" seems inadequate to account for the complexities of the changing face of the woods through The Bear triad, the relationship of Old Ben to the wilderness, and the discrepancies in response to the experience between Ike, Sam Fathers and Boon. Besides it also fails to cover the differences in the representation of the woods as sketched in Light in August and the evocation of the wilderness in The Bear, the connection
between the flood experience in *As I Lay Dying* to that in *Old Man*, and the growing complexity of the urban landscape in *Intruder in the Dust* from the backdrop in *The Sanctuary*. The present study of the four novels is a reappraisal of the metaphysical content in order to relate the maturing vision to a perfecting voice.

In the chronological perspective *Light in August* ranks first among the earliest works, for it surpasses the technical virtuosity of *The Sound and The Fury* in the assimilation of content and form. The intellectuality of *The Sound and the Fury* which comes in the form of the erudite dialogues between father and son remains restricted to the Quentin section. Though Quentin's tragedy springs from the failure to relate the conceptual to the experiential, the process remains relevant only with reference to him, while the novel itself encompasses a wider range of consciousness. In *Light in August* the metaphysical content is not restricted to the interior monologues of Joe Christmas but is diversified by its cross-connections with other responses. With reference to time and consciousness in *Light in August* certain comments by Darrel Abel appear to be relevant. He defines Faulkner's vision...

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in this novel as an endeavour to represent a fluid reality in the static terms "necessary to common sense, to language, to practical life"; and at the same time to disclose that the static images through which he makes the fluid reality visible are merely arrested and discontinuous blinks - what Bergson calls "Snapshots" or "cuttings made out of the becoming". Using Bergson as the referent, Abel interprets the countryside as "the visible metaphor of eternity" against which the legends of Lena Grove and Joe Christmas unfold as "phases of a human reality into which all personal realities fade". He identifies the sound of voices or insects constantly in the background, as "the audible image" of eternity. His approach is too schematic and it requires certain qualifications regarding the nuances in the image of human reality and the varying surface of the natural scene.

Human reality in Faulkner's works does not merely remain as "moments, postures" but is consolidated to represent a hierarchy of responses. Though Abel does refer to individual responses there seems to be a discrepancy in his method of evaluation. He cites Bergson, "the higher the consciousness, the stronger is this tension of its own duration in relation to that of things" to assert that Hightower is "the most significant
character in *Light in August*. Faulkner's hierarchy of responses, as evoked in the novels, does not appear to depend on emotional intensity but on individual perception. The image of nature in its representation of flux and stasis controls the levels of response in individuals. Besides Abel's claim that the countryside is '*the visible metaphor of eternity*" seems too categorical for the shifting backdrop of *Light in August*, appearing in the image of the woods, the town, the open fields and the image of light.

Though the countryside remains constantly there in the sense of a physical environment, there is an extraordinary simultaneity in the projection of the landscape as the order of perception. The scene is designed to project the individual's transcendence of the cultural canon in the assertion of the transpersonal. The countryside is not merely '*the visible metaphor of eternity*" as Abel perceives, it is far more significant as experiential space. Faulkner uses the mythic form to project in kinesthetic motion images of radical crucifixion in order to convey the cultural canon of the South. The pictorial space is ornamented with images that embody timelessness in the spiral on temporal design. The wagon in motion and yet not in progress is a statement of the immobility endemic to Lena's condition. The wagon moves along a prescribed path and being close to
the earth it is innately sensual, the sensuality being further heightened by the evocation of Lena as earthmother. Besides the vertical on horizontal design of the motif is a mockery of her serenity as being divine. The image of the ephemeral light as seen contained in the framework of Hightower's window, represents the waverings of a response controlled by the imagination. Hightower is indifferent to objective reality, and what remains recorded in his consciousness is that which his imagination discerns, a state diametrically opposed to Lena. In Christmas one finds a conscious attempt at coordinating the reality of the outer world with the inner one. The woods motif is used to communicate this area of response in the shifting images of solitude and isolation. On all three occasions Joe is drawn to the woods in search of shelter from reality, in the knowledge of menstruation, in the confrontation with the community after the act of murder, and in the prospect of being lynched. Joe's entry and emergence from the woods follows a recurring pattern. The experience is a transformation from the loneliness that emanates from a lack of belonging to the exhilaration that springs from an awareness of one's individuality. The distinction lies in the varying levels of response from initial fury of emotional intensity to the composed gesture of the sublime. The process of purgation is symbolised
through the image of the cracked and bleeding urns in the first instance, and the act of shaving at dawn in the second, while the third, just prior to his annihilation is reduced to a ritual. The metaphysics of the novel does not remain detached from the principal line of vision, rather it is insinuated through Joe's every gesture. His decision to return to society after the woods experience, which marks the climax of the book, rather than the fact of his death, is a choice too familiar to the existentialist ethos to be disregarded. The involvement of the racial discrepancy in Joe's birth is not to keep the level of conflict in the individual attuned to the topical key. It is used as a device to accentuate Joe's transcendence over his cultural canon.

As *Light in August* came in the earlier phase of Faulkner's writing career, it displays the author's passion for stylistic flourish. The initial stage of his literary pursuit indicates his deliberate cultivation of innovational forms and his quest for an appropriate mode for resolving the dialectical tension within. Among the early novels, *Light in August* comes through as the most effective in its treatment of spatial and temporal dimensions; it is the projection of a single consciousness vivified by layers of responses frozen into a given passage
of time. And yet the quality of language fails to cover the lack of unity in the artistic vision. Despite the technical skill, the level of irony used does not extend beyond the immediate impact of destroying the effect of romanticism. The woods motif appears rather contrived, almost reduced to an instrument for conveying the movement of the consciousness from a state of being to a state of becoming. The description of Joe's entry into Mottstown appears to uphold the dignity of choice but in the death-scene the language etiolates into yet another version of the stereotype triumph of the self over the absolute. The implication of choice is apparently existential, but since it does not extend beyond the image of Joe Christmas, it remains as an essentially personal act. The mechanics of this grand gesture is not adequate to suggest the writer's commitment to anything beyond the limits of the self. Therefore the novel leaves the reader dazzled by the author's artistry and yet groping for the more serious deliberations.

*The Wild Palms* was written during the middle phase of Faulkner's literary career, at a time when he had already superseded most of his contemporaries in the stylistics of the novel. In *The Wild Palms* he undertakes an extraordinary
feat in the prismatic projection of human experience in reality and relativity. He invokes the mythic in placing the responses in a temporal dimension and provides an added perspective by the use of the polarity in nature and art as a referent. In the two stories the pictorial space is controlled by the motifs of the palms and the river which represents the dichotomy in nature. The upright stance of the wild palms endorses the act of prevalence in Harry, over the act of endurance in the convict as depicted in the horizontal image of the river. The level of response in both stories as presented in simultaneity wavers between immediate and delayed reactions, while the distinction lies in the individual's apprehension of reality. Crisis in Old Man is specific, causal and other-directed for it comes in the shape of a physical calamity. In Wild Palms the physical determinism of Old Man is replaced by a psychological determinism for crisis appears as relative and self-directed. The time span of the flood which terminates at the end of the tale suggests that crisis is a causal phenomenon and therefore man endures by a passive resistance. Crisis in Wild Palms though short-lived is synchronised with the state of existence and is recurring in the individual's struggle to attain it. Harry's choice indicates that man is capable
of prevailing by not merely being within time but by transcending it. The hierarchy of responses is artfully presented in the delineation of nature. In *Wild Palms* the visual in the form of the palms is isolated from the experiential which is evoked in the shifting backdrop of the unkempt Mississippi riverscape, the designed urban setting and the wild snowscape of the Utah mines. The visual and the experiential are fused into one in the magnified proportions of the flood in fury in *Old Man*. And the convict's failure in distinguishing one from the other, demonstrates his lack of perception.

The alternating pattern of the two stories in *The Wild Palms* should not be regarded merely as representative of the author's penchant for innovations. Faulkner used this mode to represent fluidity in the range of human responses in time, with the aid of the passage of time in the use of flood and the tailend of the hurricane as indicators. The two experiences are not identical but they resonate ironically the crucial choice between determination and free will. The dissonance is subtly implied in the level of apprehension. In the convict it stops short at awareness in its acquiescence as he opts for life at Parchman prison, rather than for freedom. In Harry awareness is pursued to its crystallisation into experience as he chooses to defy time
by an assertion of his own existence. He repudiates death in the prison, not because he is afraid, but because he is unwilling to shift the centre of responsibility from within himself. Though Faulkner attempts to endow Harry's choice with existential overtones, the metaphysical repercussions of the act appear to lack the vigour of conviction. His alternatives are too concretised and the language fails to carry the weight of a serious dialectical tension. The process in dissociation recorded in the image of the palms is wrought with lesser potency than the image of the sun in Camus' L'Etranger. A comparative study of the final scenes of both these novels reveals that in The Wild Palms the centre of gravity remains isolated within the self because the experience is intensely personal, and that the process in dissociation is expressed chiefly through action. In L'Etranger the cryptic language itself conveys the sense of dissociation which is too well diffused here to be outlined as a process. The shifts in the centres of responsibility from the personal to the absolute are integrated within a single consciousness while Faulkner relies on two independent tales to convey a single experience. Though Camus excels in the economy of style his novel lacks the experiential range of The Wild Palms.
Besides his use of pictorial space in the image of the sun in its associations with Meursault lacks the temporal tension that Faulkner projects in his image of the wild palms and the river. There is a striking similarity in the assertion of the individual in both novels, but in Meursault, cognition of the outside forces is evoked in greater clarity, whereas in Harry it remains illusionary till the end. The invocation of the cosmic myth in Faulkner's tale provides the man in nature experience with more magnificent proportions. The exposure to nature as delineated in Harry's experience on the Mississippi coast, or as in the image of the convict caught in the flood, or the Cajun on the crocodile hunt is the rendering of primitivism through various layers of responses. The comparison with Camus' L'Étranger reveals that the artistic intent in both verges toward self-abnegation in the acknowledgement of responsibility. Yet Faulkner's language appears burdened with innuendos that tend to rouse misgivings regarding the author's clarity of vision.

In chronological perspective, his involvement in nature seems greater in The Wild Palms than in the early novels. In As I Lay Dying, the metaphysical is suggested in the reference to the land in the Addie monologue or the river in flood in the Darl section, but it is never assimilated
within the experience. The Wild Palms is a fuller probe into the structure of human responses to the world outside, but it appears to lack the inner unity of a more comprehensive vision.

The three consecutive tales of Go Down, Moses which form The Bear triad is Faulkner's most extraordinary accomplishment in the coordination of vision and voice. Here the author explores a surface of experience more authentic than earlier encountered. Besides it indicates a shift in focus from an isolation of the self in the earlier humanism to a depersonalization of the self in a new humanism. The language used appears to have shed its early self-consciousness and no longer relies on an innovative style for cultivating an effect. Improvisation if any becomes integral to the experience and no longer remains in isolation.

The mythic purpose is more pronounced in The Bear, so much so, that critics have been tempted to offer the nature myth in this story as Faulkner's brand of primitivism. John Leydenberg identifies the dual myth-making in The Bear as operating at one level in the 'symbolic representation of man's relation to the land' and its implication in Southern myth of The conquest of the land; the other
level, he claims is predominant in Section IV which "creates a McCaslin myth that fits into the broad saga of Faulkner's mythical kingdom, and it includes in nondramatic form a good deal of direct social comment". According to him the two myths are well interwoven while at the same time each retains "the source of its own light". If such categories must be made regarding the levels of myth operating in *The Bear*, it is necessary to draw the lines of distinction in the larger mythos even finer as between the Biblical myth, the primitive myth and the Southern myth, instead of telescoping them into a single representation of "the eternal struggle between Man and Nature". The complexity of Faulkner's vision appears to penetrate beyond the mythic view of man as striving forever to overcome his environment. In this story, he clothes experience in mythic garb for an aesthetic end. *The Bear* legend as traced from Ike's moment of apprehension in *Old People*, to its crystallisation into experience in *The Bear* and its reconfirmation in *Delta Autumn*, is the unfolding of an individual consciousness in temporal sequence. Faulkner uses the mythic referent to evoke an aesthetic experience. His artistry lies in exploring experience without committing himself to a philosophical creed. The process in dissociation follows a grand

movement from a sense-invoked response in *Old People*, to a suprarational one in *The Bear* and to its sublimest in self-effacement in *Delta Autumn*. As far as stylistics is concerned the mythic framework of *The Bear* triad provides the experience with unity of structure as each is designed on the pattern of the hunt. The authenticity derived from the mythic treatment of man's relation to nature remains dynamic and changing for it suggests the unique quality of Ike's experience on one hand while at the same time reiterating the ritualistic element. The heroic significance of the Prometheus myth in literature has today been reviewed to represent a new engagement in time. The nature myth in *The Bear* functions to accentuate the polarity in truth of recorded statement as in the Bible or the family ledgers, and imaginative apprehension as in the evocation of the motif. Besides myth acts as the indicator in the dramatic projection of the dichotomy in time in the image of nature in the wilderness, and of that in the motif of the buck, the bear, and the doe.

It is possible to estimate the maturing vision from a comparative study of the woods as it appears in *Light in August* and the role of the wilderness in *The Bear*. In the early work, the woods are briefly used as an artistic media for the process in dissociation. But the quality
of language is incapable of redeeming it from the symbolic context to a more serious implication in time. Besides dialectical tension in the novel remains restricted in scope for the delineation of time in the image of the woods is perfunctory. The tremendous upheaval in the backdrop of the triad, as it shifts from the image of the impenetrable forest in *Old People*, to the ravaged wilderness in *The Bear* and the deforested stretches of *Delta Autumn*, appears to represent the process of decentralization. The landscape which functions as the experiential space encompasses the widening of responses in an individual by a series of interaction with the rationale. The changing scene does not merely reflect a state of flux in the physical reality of nature. The landscape is an impassioned statement of the catalytic force that emulates the creative in its constant revision of the conceptual in man and nature. On this moving surface the t - t motif is superimposed as pictorial space. The image of the buck, the bear, and the doe in each story serves as the indicator to a hierarchy of responses. The pattern of change and immutability is simultaneously worked into each image. Being governed by the level of perception in the individual consciousness, each image evolves and controls its own hierarchy of responses. Since responses
remain in flux, the hierarchy must continuously be revised. Ike's increasing apprehension of his own function in the hunting ritual facilitates the passage from one level of participation to another, from the mystical to the metaphysical. The image of the immortal buck represents an experience restricted to the supernatural realms. Its vision signifies the endorsement of one's true initiation into a new life-style. The magnificent proportions of the bear are deliberately exaggerated for it reflects a dual perspective; it is delineated with clarity as an objective reality, while its subjective reality may be discerned from the varied apprehensions. The dual vision in the image of the doe— as the hunted animal and the woman (octroon) suggests the innate conflict in subjective truth. Though the motifs maintain an identical stance they vary in the quality of dialectical tension evoked. In Old People the conflict springs from the boy's glimpse of the immortal buck for it leaves him torn between what he knows to be an essentially spiritual experience and what he believes to be an intensely personal one. The bear motif rouses in Ike's consciousness a sense of polarity in the images of truth as recorded and as experience through an awareness of the temporal. In Delta Autumn the intensity of the
conflict is deliberately diffused for the experience is extended beyond the constrictions of the self to a wider connotation of man. The acknowledgement of the stance in the doe-woman springs not merely from a recognition of a similar stance embedded in his innermost self but through a cognition of the forces outside. Faulkner uses the racial myth of the South as the contextual base of a simulation of the absolute in the hierarchy of responses. The hierarchy is invoked in recurring patterns in the primitivist experience of the buck, in the transcendent experience of the bear and the sublimated experience of the doe and it is imposed on the fluidity of responses.

In The Bear triad Faulkner does not rely on the levels of myth for the purpose of evolving an inner unity as is characteristic of Joyce. Myth in Faulkner's works is not used to impose order on the fragment of experience by a telescoping of all of man's activities within the single range of the mythic view of life. For a fuller understanding of The Bear, it is essential to draw a line between the use of myth and the artistic vision. Myth functions up to the extent that it provides a palpable source for the fabrication of life in the South. Faulkner's vision probes beyond the mythic to encompass the inner unity of a creative force that moves in simultaneity with
the process in individuation. The Bear legend traces the growth of an individual consciousness from a state of nascence within the closed circuit of the self to a state of maturity in the acknowledgement of a wider vortex. The disparity in the projection of Ike in the introduction in Old People and at the conclusion in Delta Autumn has been viewed by several critics as the artist's attempt to place a mock-heroic gesture within the framework of modern existence. To interpret the image of Ike at the end as a puny shadow of his former self is to fail to perceive the vitality that emerges from his unity of experience. The vision of the individual that is projected in The Bear is not a celebration of the self in isolation. The individual is put through a process in dissociation which promotes his integration with the other. Though the act is singled out in its supremacy, the gesture has relevance only when it is in consort with the forces outside the self. Much of the success of The Bear lies in the perfect alignment of art and thought.

In Intruder in The Dust there is no remarkable transformation in the artistic vision. It appears to be a more ambitious project than The Bear for it undertakes
the task of exploring language in order to discover the authenticity of experience. In this novel, Faulkner sheds the earlier ingenuous tools and grapples with the most exploited of them all, the language itself. In the other novels he appears to use language for a specific artistic purpose. The essence of the Intruder lies in Chick's confrontation with the mode of communication and his efforts to transpose into language an experience in timelessness. Here Faulkner abandons the art of myth-making and projects the landscape itself in multi-dimension for a more effective evocation of the cultural consciousness.

The handling of the racial theme in Intruder in the Dust is not mythic as in Light in August. It reflects the author's maturing vision in the total dispensation of an agent in assuming an aesthetic distance. He uses a current social controversy as the contextual base for his exploration of the individual consciousness. His focus is not on the social malaise; he probes the social surface to reassess language in its semantic usage. He challenges the efficacy of language in coping with the contemporaneity of experience. Intruder in the Dust traces the growth of a modern consciousness from the state of isolation to a state of integration. The process
in dissociation transforms, in Chick, the sense of a lack of belonging to the sense of a lack in communication, for the centre of gravity shifts from the consciousness to the creative force of language. The cultivated deliberations over such words as "Sambo", "homogenous", "intractable" indicates that the author's intent is not merely the evocation of a mood but is a more serious concern with the semantic connotations of everyday usage. In his references to "Sambo", Faulkner carries the word beyond its social context. It is no longer relevant as a form of deprecation, nor does it function as a tribute. Rather it reveals itself as a condition, best expressed as "the odour" which is a phenomenon endemic to all races. That is why the true significance of Lucas lies not in his image as representative of the Negro race, but as an universal gesture in abstraction. The word "intractable" is assigned to the stance and not the man, to denote the firmness of purpose. The use of the word "homogenous" conveys a sense of depersonalization. It is the process by which the consciousness transcends the space-bound limits of the self to enter a timeless realm. Homogeneity is not restricted to the vision of the Southerners as a cohesive group; it is extended to contain the image of an integrated universe. The
metaphysics of this novel overreaches that of *The Bear* in the way Chick grapples with the Vocabulary in order to concretise the experience. The hunt ritual and the wilderness backdrop in *The Bear* are improvisations for creating an aura of sublimity. In *Intruder*, Faulkner plunges into the mainstream of contemporary existence for the purpose of simulating reality in a purely aesthetic experience.

*Intruder in The Dust* is an adventurous feat for here the experiential space and the visual space are interwoven with tremendous skill. The experiential and the visual are not presented in a superimposition of one on the other as in *The Bear*, but the two levels of response appear to spill onto each other on the surface of experience. The images of man and nature coalesce in space to become interchangeable forms in the representation of continuity and immutability. The countryside and the community are inextricably fused into the extended landscape, while the image of Lucas and the pines are telescoped to focus on a single stance. In *The Intruder*, the images no longer remain in suspension as in *Light in August*; here there is a conscious effort to place them within the context of the experience. Though the novel is an imaginative reconstruction of the South, Chick's experience in nature
and time indicates a transcendence of the regional culture to an acknowledgement of humanity. The process in dissociation is not complete by a mere recognition of the temporal and spatial bounds of the self. Chick responds to the element of the transpersonal embedded in the Lucas motif and vivified as Lucas-Sambo, Lucas-Christ. The impact of this experience enables him to establish rapport with the universal in the collective unconscious, as projected in the changing image of the community. The community in *Intruder in the Dust* appears in dual perspective. At one level it operates as the experiential landscape in Chick's constant awareness of the crowd out there, apprehended as if the Square is the very vortex of human activity. Chick's sense of community is spurred by his response to the collective unconscious. At the visual level, Chick's initial response to the gathering numbers appears as a single entity, "the face", as an urge that springs from an unity of purpose in the mob. Towards the end when he returns to the Square to witness the disintegration of the mass, he realises that the relevance of the urge does not lie in the qualitative as in the cause or in the quantitative as in the numbers but on a wider vortex of universality. The truth of existence does not depend on the assertion of personal
integrity or communal integrity but on the affirmation of integrity in mankind. The alternating between the boy's apprehension of the landscape and its articulation in the dialogues with his uncle is a superb stylistic achievement. It communicates with tremendous vigour the polarity within existence by projecting the dual experience in simultaneity. The individual is torn between the earthbound struggle to relate the self to the temporal and the metaphysical striving toward a renewal of the self in the spatial. The inner unity of Chick's experience emanates from his awareness of space and time to be forces in flux from which the human endeavour redeems itself as an immutable urge.

**Intruder in the Dust** is Faulkner's most daring probe into the image of the individual as engaged in the process of metamorphosis. He equals Kafka in the projection of this transformation for he does not rely on an external symbol, but he evolves his images from his very source. Besides his involvement of language in the generative process of creativity distinguishes him as one, among many writers of his age. He wrote at a time when the artistic focus still rested on the individual and on the verity of his experience. Faulkner's maturing vision is marked
by the shift from the image of the self as outlined heavily in its gesture in *Light in August* to the diffused image of the self and the gesture in *Intruder in the Dust*. In the earlier novel the range is limited and therefore the response in Joe is dramatized. The experience that he undergoes is a process of purgation and this is why Joe comes nearer to the traditional brand of humanistic heroes. The emotional intensity of experience is reduced in *Intruder in the Dust*. The spectrum is widened as Chick's experience through all its phases is projected in dialectical tension. The revised image of the self is not visualised in its total isolation in transcendence. The new image of the self appears to live off the surface of experience and yet its achievement lies in its integration with the fabric of humanity.

Faulkner's art lies in suggestion rather than statement. The sense of nature remains central to his vision through the mature period of his writing. His image of nature evades the critical trap of being termed as dated for it does not adhere to the doctrinaire in form. His metaphysics is classical in its serious concern with man and the cosmic phenomenon, while at the same time it is modern in its preoccupation with human engagement with time. The external world and its interaction with the individual
being endemic to the American experience, as a theme it has proved to be a continual challenge to the American writer. On one hand Faulkner's 'regionalism' establishes him firmly within the tradition in its involvement in the South, its geography, its culture and its people. And yet Faulkner's art transcends this regionalism to place him in the ranks of the Great Individuals. Regionalism though limited in space is not limited in time as it pervades through his works, and this is what accounts for the timelessness of his novels. His use of nature shows an awareness of a new technological circuit which has widened the scope of man's experience by the elimination of cultural distance. His handling of nature myths in the portrayal of responses and his evocations of man in nature and man in community suggest archetypes recognisable in most cultures. It is Faulkner's treatment of nature that isolates him from the mainstream of novelists. In the works of other writers whose concerns are metaphysical, nature appears to be the media for formulating a creed. The content of nature in Faulkner's novels is a perfect fusion of art and thought. It seems inappropriate to identify the landscape of his novels as the image of eternity or the image of history. Faulkner's creative vision projects nature as a dynamic state which generates its own vitality from the clash
between diametrically opposed forces in time. The conflict in the evolutionary process lies between change which simulates the forces of humanizing and immutability in the urge to impose order. This dialectical tension is aesthetised in the image of nature. The vision of the extended landscape unfolds as the arena of experience while on this fluid surface the cultural canon is invoked in mobilized postures. Endemic to this state of flux is a counter-force in resistance which is evoked in abstraction as the t-t motif. The spiral on temporal image of nature registers responses in all man and nature interactions. While continuity is inferred from the variability in response, the immutable is impressed on the pattern of hierarchy. The movement isolates an individual consciousness at certain levels of perception. The process includes the discovery of the authentic self within the vortex and the transformation in the self in its cognition of the outside world. As the experience gains in momentum the artist invigorates the man in nature and man in community images by an evocation of the temporal. The chronological study reveals that the maturing vision encompasses a widening experience.

Like Eliot, Faulkner appears to derive a base from tradition but the authenticity of his art lies in the unity
of creative vision and voice. Faulkner's nature manifests itself as the surface of a kinesthetic experience. The image of the reconditioned self as the man among all men is contained by a plastic environment which is a simulcrum of a world culture. Time and space perspectives do not merely enliven man and nature configurations but are used to evoke an aesthetic experience. The essence of his art appears to lie not in the improvisation of form but in the wrestling of deeper significance from human existence. Faulkner's vision of nature resuscitates his art so that he gives a new life to the image of nature in the modern novel.