CHAPTER II

THE FUGUE OF PURSUIT
Nature manifests itself in various forms in the works of William Faulkner. This chapter is a scrutiny of nature as an elemental texture of experience. The Yoknapatawpha county as a conglomeration of cultures, reflects the primitive in patterns of behaviour as well as in impulses and gestures. Most critics tend to believe that the semblance of reality in Faulkner's imaginary county springs from the Southerner's proximity to the land. Howard Odum defines Southern society as a folk culture. He states that:

The way of the South has been and is the way of the folk, symbolic of what the people feel, think and do as conditioned by their cultural heritage and the land which Nature has given them.  

Odum provides us with an insight into the Southerner's preoccupation with the land. But Faulkner's vision transforms the reality of nature into the aesthetics of experience. In his novels nature is not merely an appropriate backdrop for depicting an elemental life-style. His treatment of nature suggests that the artistic purpose lies in the evocation of response. His writing encompasses a wider arena of experience than the South. And what appears as particular to the South is simultaneously envisaged as particular to a universal culture. Faulkner's portrayal of the elemental response does not embody an endorsement of primitivism. The

primitive strain runs through the very fabric of Faulkner's South in varying degrees of response. Though being virtually in motion the elemental response, being governed solely by the instincts, terminates in stasis. This chapter undertakes a study of the author's use of temporal and spatial dimensions for the projection of this response in its vacillations. At the communal level, the elemental in nature evokes a sense of "throbbing togetherness". Philip Wheelwright in a perceptive account of time perspectives in primitive and modern societies, claims that "tribally shared rhythms" continue to persist. His review of the present reveals that:

Even today communal response tends to involve an element of "throbbing together" — whether to the same journalistic cliché's or to the same jukebox "syncopations". The Yoknapatawpha community is at times projected as participants in a mass drill, gyrating to the sound of organ and voices or to the muted rhythms of the lynch drama. At the individual level, the elemental response appears to impede endosmosis. The conflict between the individual and the communal is projected in patterns of continuity and crisis. In Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha county, the community by its sheer will to survive, shows itself to be continuous. Displacement has been the common experience of the Indian, the Negro and the white. Faulkner's novels and short stories reveal how each

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has improvised his own mode of survival. The Red Leaves and the account of the Cajun settlement in Old Man provides an insight into isolated pockets of elemental living. The church services in Soldier’s Pay and The Sound and The Fury indicate the black community’s adoption of the white man’s culture. The lynch mobs of Sanctuary and Intruder in the Dust depict the white man’s desperate assertions through ego yogas. In Faulkner’s works the communal response serves as a fluctuating surface in continuity, and crisis is projected through the individual’s writhings in his psychic turmoil.

A close-up of pursuit in Faulkner’s works shows that he uses it in its literal and metaphoric form. The spirit of the hunt appears to control the theme in Red Leaves, Old Man and The Bear. As a discussion of Old Man and The Bear follows at greater length in later chapters, the present study restricts itself to the portrayal of hunt in actuality. All three stories have a common backdrop in the wilderness setting. And in each, though the apparent conflict is restricted to the hunt, the author seems to infer an underlying tension in continuity and crisis.

In Red Leaves the structure of the hunt governs the act. The story begins with the image of the two Indians in stalk of their quarry, a Negro slave, and ends with the scene of his capture. The slave is pursued so that he may be buried to
complete the funeral rites of the tribal chief Ikkemotubbe.
The slave's flight is etched on the surface of the dark forest.
The silhouette of the two Indians reflects the inscrutability of the landscape. Their profile is evoked in terms of nature, seen as:

... big heads, big broad, dust-coloured faces of a certain blurred serenity ... looming out of a mist. The sun had done it, the violent sun, the violent shade. Their hair looked like sedge-grass on burnt-over land. 11

The author simulates a resemblance so that the two men and the natural scene appear as one. It is as though the energy, concentration and precision with which the two Indians waylay their quarry, is generated by their exposure to the sun.

Against this common façade of continuity in man and nature, crisis is posed in the image of the slave. Though impending death is the apparent crisis, the actual crisis springs from the slave's attempt to rationalise a ritual. The chiaroscuro of light and shade, the sounds of the slave's rasping breath and the music of the drums are meticulous innuendos to evoke the slave's fluctuating responses. Crisis is underlined in the shifts in mood from despair to panic to resolution. The lack of conflict in the Indians suggests the impassive front of continuity. The opening scene provides a perspective to

their response. As the two Indians stand at a distance from the slave quarters, their conversation centres around the inmates of the huts. The exchange is not to provide a glimpse of the Negro condition. It is used to serve as an insight into the Indian response; the dialogue runs on these lines:

"They are like horses and dogs'.

"They are like nothing in this sensible world. Nothing contents them save sweat. They are worse than the white people'."12

The use of the word 'sensible' gives us a clue to the underlying irony. Their rigidity of response springs from the collective unconscious whereas the slave's act of defiance is an individual assertion. The trauma does not lie in his fear of death, but in his inability to acquiesce to a communal cause. Fear is no longer an instinctive response, for the Negro, it is as endemic to his condition, as "the smell of them, of their bodies". The elemental is invoked in the Negro through the paraphernalia of ritual as "the minor accessories, the cryptic ornaments, the ceremonial records" or through a mystic communion as in the slave. The occasion when he encounters the cottonmouth moccasin marks the moment of apprehension. As he reclines on a log, a moving line of ants provokes him to such hunger that he devours them. The temporal is insinuated in this elemental act:

12. Ibid., p.102
He caught them and ate them slowly, watching the unbroken line move up the log and into oblivous doom with a steady and terrific undeviation. The appearance of the cottonmouth at evening precipitates the climax. As he gazes on the cottonmouth slashing at his arm, he pays a tribute to the snake "'Ole, grandfather". And from the process of his identification with the primeval emerges his reiterated response in the words "'It's that I do not wish to die". The posture of the Negro is made more graphic by placing him within the swamp, so that when the Indians discover him at dawn, they find him "'mud-caked, sitting on a log, singing". Though the slave's song strikes an elemental note, his stance in death acquires a dignity which it had never displayed in flight. The ironic tone is not abandoned at any point. The levels of response are subtly induced in the words of the Indian who captures him: "'You ran well. Do not be ashamed'". And the slave even on the verge of death pays a last tribute to the snake.

The essence of the story lies in the projection of the image of pursuit in ironic inversion. The wilderness, setting, the reference to dawn and dusk and the act itself suggests a primeval experience. Yet the sacrosanct aura of the primeval is destroyed by the insertion of the quarry as man rather than animal. Faulkner's use of the hunt implies his exploration of responses through shifting states of consciousness.

13. Ibid., p.124.
The Cajun's pursuit of the crocodile in *Old Man* is one of the most graphic descriptions of the hunt in actuality. The landscape opens to a:

... flat fecund waste, neither earth nor water, where even the senses doubted which was which, which rich and massy air and which mazy and impalpable vegetation ...  

The convict who accompanies the Cajun on the hunt provides another perspective in time. Though the crocodile hunt in the *Old Man* story is apparently incidental, its significance lies in the projection of the elemental in variation. As the two close in on their prey, the convict's resilience appears as "that intense immobility of complete sobriety of a blind man" while the Cajun's wild ejaculations are described as "the tense gobbling hissing actually, not rapid and repressed". To the accompaniment of the Cajun's hysterical gestures, the convict performs the ritual of the hunt with the same "cold intentness of a curator or custodian". The juxtaposition of the convict and the Cajun has been interpreted by Olga Vickery as a representation of the stages of man's development. She views the Cajun settlement as:

... a primitive form of society which provides a precarious and merely temporary equilibrium between the individual, the community, and nature.

Olga Vickery's interpretation suggests that Faulkner imposes certain value-judgements. She states that:

Individual integrity and mutual trust are the bases of human association in the Cajun settlement. But in placing the Cajun beside the convict, Faulkner appears to concern himself with time perspectives rather than the moral content. The Cajun is described as a "little wiry man with rotting teeth and soft wild bright eyes like a rat or a chipmunk". His appearance, his mode of communication and his means of livelihood represents the elemental as a way of life, as a continuous activity. "The savage", according to Malinowski, "is one who recognises both the natural and the supernatural forces and agencies, and he tries to use them for his benefit". The response in the Cajun comes as a reflex action governed by the instinct of survival and therefore the focus remains on the act. In the presentation of the convict the focus shifts constantly between the thought process and the act, for the elemental in the convict lies embedded in his consciousness. The levels of response are once again projected in the diverse reactions to the threat posed by the dynamiting of the levee. The confrontation with the unpredictable finds the Cajun opting for the easiest way out as he at once packs his meagre belongings and quits the scene. The decision to abandon the spot comes as a delayed reaction to the convict. He convinces himself that the impending doom is yet one more instance of fate controlling


his life. For the Cajun, survival is obtained by the evasion of crisis, whereas the convict endures by rationalising it. The elemental in the Cajun is continuous for it emanates from without, in his direct interaction with nature. In the convict, the elemental is short-lived for it evolves from the inner recess of his mind. The convict's experience in nature appears to be once-removed from reality for the stance he is seen to adopt is "an attitude not of dejection but profoundly bemused, contemplative". The Cajun and the convict do not seem to be posed against each other to represent the folly of man's progress. The response to nature in each appears to denote a distinction in time.

The story of The Bear conveys the spirit of pursuit in its sublimest form. The mythic invocations and the community's 'participation mystique' transports the act of hunting to its primordial order. The killing of the immortal bear appears as a tableau in its aura of sanctity. The elemental is projected on the surface wilderness, the texture of experience and in the quality of response. Boon appears as an epitome of the elemental in the intensity of his reflexes. His annihilation of old Ben is on a moment's impulse as he springs into action to protect his favourite, the dog Lion. There is a childlike innocence about Boon that drives him to the act of violence as if it were a sacred ritual. Boon,
like the Indians in *Red Leaves* is described in terms of nature. His face:

"... looked like somebody had found a walnut a little larger than a football and with a machinist’s hammer had shaped features into it." 17

Boon’s identification with the elemental is complete in his use of an elemental weapon to fell the massive animal. Like the Cajun in *Old Man*, Boon survives by averting crisis. The presence of Boon throughout the hunting experience rings a note of continuity. And at the close the changed face of the wilderness is reflected in Boon’s dishevelled appearance.

The distinction between the Cajun and the convict in *Old Man* is delineated with greater clarity in *The Bear*. Sam, like the convict embraces the elemental when he enters into a covenant with the wilderness. Sam’s opting for a life in the forest is an act of faith. The elemental response in Sam appears to be regenerated by the annual ritual of the hunt for Old Ben. The death of the bear is a moment of crisis for Sam, and like the convict, in choosing to terminate his own life, he exercises an option. Sam’s self-immolation is projected as a mythic release. Boon’s oneness with the elemental way of life provides a surface of continuity. Crisis for Sam does not appear in the shape of physical threat. Though Sam is not a direct participant in the killing of Old Ben, the witnessing of it is too traumatic for him.

Sam's identification with the Bear indicates that the elemental in him is internalized. The time perspectives in *The Bear* are imbued in the experience with tremendous skill. In Ike, Faulkner provides us with the added dimension in the hierarchy of responses. Ike's consciousness records the quality of endurance in Sam. The hunt experience is the boy's exposure to human responses in time. At the end, as he witnesses Boon's disintegration, Ike realises that time for Boon is restricted to the chronological. In Sam's self-immolation he recognises a gesture of repudiation against time. Ike's own act of revocation is his tribute to the timelessness of Old Ben and Sam's gesture. *The Bear* verifies that Faulkner's art is not restricted to the representation of the primitive as a mode of existence. He appears to continually probe below the surface of life in an exploration of the responses within.

Faulkner's studies of the 'po white trash' communities reveal the primitive strain beneath the façade of inscrutability. In *As I Lay Dying*, several personal pursuits, unfold in simultaneity, and are ironically telescoped into a common quest. The family elaborately follow the community's norms in the meting out of grief, the shared responsibility among Bundren members and the participation in ritual. Through the hazardous journey they maintain a corporate front. And yet all along,
the individual vested interests, leer behind assuming grotesque shapes. Addie, like Old Ben, holds a central position in the structure of the novella. She appears as the hunted prey ostentatiously victimized because of her impetuous heedlessness of the community. She responds to the elemental evoked in the red blood boiling through the land. And it is not her iniquity but her arrogance that alienates her from her family and her peers. A comparison with a true hunting tale as *The Bear*, reveals that Addie too, like Old Ben, holds a pivotal place not only in controlling the principal act, but in promoting a hierarchy of responses. The Darl sections provide us with an index to individual responses. Except for Vardaman, at the moment of grief, one finds that each character is preoccupied with the corporate front, the face with which to greet other faces. The "wooden" quality in Jewel which Darl perceives is a cover for the most elemental of passions. Dewey Dell's pretentious domesticity is a desperate stall for intense emotions while Anse's meekness hides an insidious cunning. Darl's intuitive ability to discern latent evil in individuals, proves him to be a threat that must either be humoured or exterminated. The members of his family dispose of him by committing him to the lunatic asylum. Darl's description of the flood experience provides us with an insight into that aspect of the Bundrens that identifies them with the community.
The paradox of their condition lies in their proximity to the elemental, and their failure to recognise the elemental within. The stolidness with which the family faces the flood as if it were an everyday phenomenon renders their act of endurance mock-heroic. It is the same deterministic response in Boon that reduces his act of courage into a ritualistic participation. And it is a similar staidness in Mink that turns his brave bid for vendetta into a parody. The Bundren family's stoic endurance of flood and fire evokes a sense of continuity. The apparent crisis in the form of the flood, indicates that Darl is the only member in whom time is internalised. In *As I Lay Dying* the ironic tone is tersely mingled with an irrepressible folk humour. The hunt, in this story, begins with the prey already dead and relates its capture in flashback. Besides the sanctity of the burial ceremonial is destroyed by the putrid odour that the decomposing body expels. The line of buzzards that hover over the coffin and trail the Bundrens on their journey underlines the theme of pursuit.

Faulkner's account of the Snopes tribe provides an ironical view of the esprit de corps prevalent among the 'po white trash' community. The trilogy offers numerous glimpses of inter-tribal activities among the Snopes. The communal spirit amongst the Snopes enables them to perform a successful coup d'etat of all trade in Jefferson county.
Flem wields an unconditional authority over the clan, and in duress, they depend on him for alleviation. Their innate pliancy and the tribal spirit contributes to the success of the Snopes organisation. At the time of a crumbling Southern aristocracy, the Snopes appear to assert a state of continuity. Crisis looms in the image of Mink Snopes who proves to be the only vulnerable one. He falters for he is incapable of cultivating a guise to mask the elemental. He is simultaneously seen in the role of pursuer and pursued in The Mansion. His innate sense of victimization provokes him to indulge in acts of indiscretion as the murder of Jack Houston over "that ere extra one-dollar pound fee". Mink's carefully planned murder of Flem springs from humiliation over his cousin's nonchalance. The name Mink also suggests him to be an unwitting prey. The Mansion is an exploration of Mink's consciousness to trace the transformation from self-oriented urge to an other-directed one. The elevated language at the close is ironic in its placing of Mink's level of response. After the murder of Flem, he is seized with an overwhelming sense of freedom, as if he were at last acquitted of a burden. Perhaps the burden is a sense of responsibility, for he looks on himself as the self-appointed avenger of the tribe. He deludes himself that his motives in killing his cousin are not selfish. As he lays down on the earth, his imagination soars to identify himself as one of
"Helen and the bishops, the kings and the unhomed angels, the scornful and graceless seraphim". These lines echo ironically, for the very act, of placing himself against the earth, is a silent endorsement of his identification with the elemental. At this stage Mink believes that he can afford to yield to the earth for he regards his act of murder as an act of absolution:

Because a man had to spend not just all his life but all the time of Man too guarding against it, even back when they said man lived in caves, he would raise up a bank of dirt to at least keep him that far off the ground while he slept, until he invented wood floors to protect him and at last beds too, raising the floors storey by storey until they would be laying a hundred and even a thousand feet up in the air to be safe from the earth. 18

The elemental is embedded in Mink's consciousness, but he attempts to rationalize it in order to affect an aura of the sublime. Irony is unmistakable throughout, but especially pervading in the final scene for it is used to define the essence of Mink's act. The proximity to the earth, like the act of murder, does not suggest transcendence. It insinuates that Mink's response remains contained within the elemental.

An individual's attempt to repudiate the elemental is often dramatized by the evocation of pursuit as a metaphor.

In such stories as *That Evening Sun*, *Dry September*, *Pantaloon in Black* and in the novels such as *Absalom, Absalom*, *Sanctuary* and *The Mansion*, the hunt experience is implied rather than stated. The backdrop is more varied than the wilderness setting, for it becomes alive to the welter of shifting responses. But the structure of the hunt is maintained and subtly delineated in the form of the components, the act of chase and the annihilation at the end. The conflict between the pursuer and the pursued emerges from the confrontation between the individual versus his condition. The underlying irony enables us to view the individual's experience in the precipitation of death as an abnegation of the elemental. And yet the Dionysiac frenzy of their participation itself suggests that the individual remains caught within the stronghold of the elemental.

In *That Evening Sun*, Nancy, a Negro domestic in the Compson household, lives under the threat of murder at the hands of her absconding husband. She invites this condition on herself by her promiscuous activities with the whites. Nancy seems to will herself to white men, not because of a dearth in her own community, but because she imagines that in this manner she would efface the blackness within. The irony of her situation is exquisitely enunciated in the Compson family's total inability to realise her presentiment. The story is an account of flight which operates at two levels.
At one level it is a flight from impending doom, actual or imagined, suggested in the refrain "I can feel him yonder in that ditch". At another, it is her desire to escape from facing her own failure. Nancy's fear finds an outlet in the elemental. Her response, as projected through the terror-stricken eyes, the helpless dangling hands, the gaping mouth and the frequent howl, is animalistic. The title, *That Evening Sun*, does not merely function as a backdrop. The movement of the sun appears to follow the direction of Nancy's self-precipitated death. She responds to the sun as though it were a curtain about to drop on her life of wanton lascivity. The flickering light of the waning sun is an endorsement of the elemental in Nancy. The woman's despair comes from an awareness that cohabitation with the white has proved inadequate to extinguish the elemental within.

*Dry September* is a cryptic paradigm of the hunt. Faulkner's superb control over language prevents the lynch-experience from being reduced to an exclusively Southern ritual. The inevitability of chase is invoked in the irreconcilable in the weather and the irreconcilable in man. Willie Mayes is the object of the white man's wrath as his shadow happens to fall across the fantasy-ridden spinster Miss Minnie Cooper. The story relates the motions of the community as it braces itself to pursuit and annihilation.
The lynch is performed to uphold the dignity of the white woman. Faulkner uses the white barber as an added perspective into the communal response. Though he belongs to the community, throughout the action, he seems to remain on the fringe of the experience. The barber provides an insight into the aberrations of the senile spinster and the sickness rampant in the community at large. Irony is used with supreme control. The lynch mob's pursuit of Willie Mayes is viewed as the communal quest for self-assertion.

The oppressive heat and the overhanging dust is artistically integrated into the experience. The dust and the heat, the lurid imaginings of the spinster, the white man's injured pride all appear to contribute to the conflagration at the end. The reiterated references to the dust and the heat convey the state of enervation in the white man. The lynch is enacted as a ritual to resuscitate his passion. The stifling atmosphere and the crescendo-like movement of the passion are again and again telescoped into one. As the lynch party move toward their destination along with their captive, Willie Mayes, there are several references to the natural scene. The calm before the climax is described thus:

Below the east the wan hemorrhage of the moon increased. It heaved above the ridge, silvering the air, the dust, so that they seemed to breathe, live in a bowl of molten lead. There was no sound of nightbird nor insect, no sound save
their breathing and a faint ticking of contracting metal about the cars. Where their bodies touched one another they seemed to sweat dryly, for no more moisture came. 19

Though the white men are projected in action, the title itself suggests the stasis of their response. The sanctity of pursuit is undercut at every stage. The crusade to reinstate the white woman’s prestige is reviewed from several perspectives. Miss Cooper’s final mental crack-up underlines the injudiciousness of the lynch act. The barber recognises the inanity of the lynch party’s attempt to eradicate the elemental with elemental weapons. The dialogue between McClendon and his wife in the closing scene provides a third perspective. The atmosphere generated by the exchange, as he reprimands his wife and roughly casts her aside appears as the dying spurt of violence in the lynch leader. The man’s tense jerky gestures as he enters his home which is ‘trim and fresh as a bird-cage and almost as small’ underlines the final stasis. As he prepares for the night, every act is ritualistic. McClendon’s confrontation with the elemental leaves him in an enervated condition. Stasis is evoked in the image of the man viewed last as ‘with his body pressed against the dusty screen, he stood panting’.

19. W.F., Dry September, SSSOWF, p.71
The reference to the backdrop follows:

There was no movement, no sound, not even an insect. The dark world seemed to lie stricken beneath the cold moon and lidless stars.

The natural setting is an endorsement of the stasis that engulfs an elemental response. The intensity of passion whipped up for the performance of the lynch appears to exhaust itself with the act.

*Pantaloons in Black* is a combination of pursuit as actual and metaphoric. The hunt in actuality is enacted toward the end in the capture and annihilation of the black man. The story functions largely in the form of pursuit as metaphor in the black man's quest for release. Rider, a young sawmill labourer loses his child bride within days of the marriage and finds himself unable to reconcile to her death. He seems to anneal his sorrow by giving vent to his passions. Images of the man are projected in comic grotesquerie as he indulges in gambling and liquor and extraordinary physical feats, to find solace from grief. The spirit of pursuit has been assiduously evoked in the scenes of his endless rambles. The image of man and dog, impaled by the light of the wavering moon as they lay down to rest, appears to be imposed in suspension over the continuity of the scene. The noise emitted by the sleeping man "the loud harsh snoring which sounded not like groans of pain but like someone engaged without arms in prolonged

single combat" underlines the crisis within. The image of the man is cast larger than life to implicate the magnitude of grief, projected in "the long cast of his solitary shadow slanting away across the hill and beyond, across the mazy infinitude of all the nightbound earth". Rider is viewed as a victim of passion as he seems to move steadily towards his own immolation. The sheriff sizes up the black man's response thus:

But when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might just as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes. Now you take this one today. The sheriff lives in a world of laiddown folkways and mores and nothing in his code accounts for this uncalled for display of passions. The sheriff refuses to acknowledge the elemental within himself and his delegating it to the niggers and the animals is his way of reconciliation. His sizing up of Rider's emotion provides yet another perspective for human responses to the elemental. Apparently Rider's stance is incomprehensible to his own people, for his aunt and uncle make a valiant effort to steer him back to the course of everyday living. She advises him to place his faith in God: "Can't nothing help you but Him". "Ax Him," because she sincerely believes that the ritual would take his mind off the elemental. And yet all along, though Rider's acts are viewed

as uncontrolled fits of a near lunatic, there also appears to be a serene method to his madness. The man he murders happens to be a crook who was in the process of swindling him. From the very first act, when he enters his own home and approaches the hearth to reconstruct once again those days of bliss, every move on his part seems deliberate and measured. The title itself suggests that the irony rests in the image of the black man. The white man believes that Rider's exhibitionism is because he knows no other outlet and yet Rider's oneness of purpose indicates that he chooses death because he fails to find a resolution to his pursuit of life. All his gestures of physical prowess display his exaggerated effort to liberate himself from self-imposed strictures, the most valiant of which, is his last desperate bid in the prison-cell. It is the sincerity of his commitment to the elemental that gives dignity to Rider's stance, and it is this sincerity which the men of the sheriff's company wilfully interpret as clowning. By deriding him, the white man hopes to overcome the discrepancy in his own response. Though Rider, as the pantaloon, does function as the butt of the white man's jokes, the writer's ironic tone insinuates that the last laugh is his.

In the novels, *Sanctuary*, *Absalom, Absalom* and *The Mansion*, the image of the hunt is evoked in the metaphoric form. All three novels convey the sense of pursuit, in the
individual's apprehension of a design, his endeavours to concretize it, and the invocation to death at the end. Popeye, Flem Snopes and Sutpen have their roots in the elemental for all three hail from the poor white community of the South. And yet each stands in isolation in a vain bid to efface his own origin. The quality of innocence as it appears in these three needs qualification. It is an ironic innocence for each character assumes blinkers and chooses to ignore anything that lies beyond his design. In Popeye, Flem Snopes and Sutpen the ironic stance is adopted to operate as the emotional distancer, and innocence springs from their inability to realize that the stance is surface thin. Sutpen's design is his sandcastle built around an indignity suffered in childhood, and what he pursues in life is a revocation of his own past. His act of transplanting himself to a more sophisticated milieu, his marriage of respectability in Ellen Goldfield, and his ruthless dispensation of his first-born are cultivated gestures to pronounce his dismemberment from his origin. And yet one perceives that the elemental lurks as a shadow behind every move. The image of Sutpen, as he stands stripped while wrestling with his slaves, grovelling in flesh and dust, is a silent endorsement of the elemental in him. The gloating eyes, as he looks on Ellen's terror-stricken face while he drives, in maniac fury, his family to the church, and the
pleasure, he derives from casting out, with inexplicable viciousness, the girl he had bedded in the hope of begetting a son, are kaleidoscopic views of the elemental within. Popeye too like Sutpen, assumes a veneer of impertubability. The image of a mask is evoked in the very description of his face which has "that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin" and on which the eyes are placed as "two knobs of soft black rubber". Popeye's pursuit is enunciated in the opening scene of the novel, in the quiet and effective manner in which he waylays his victim Horace Benbow. The image of the hunt is unmistakably evoked in the description of Popeye, as he stalks his quarry from behind the shadow of the trees, while Horace Benbow stoops to refresh himself at the spring, in the interlude as they sit facing each other for two hours in silence, and the escorting of Benbow to his den at Old Frenchman's creek. Though Popeye professes the front of a sophisticate as he appears like "a modernistic lampstand", the elemental is implied in stray responses as he momentarily abandons his stance. In the opening scene, while Popeye and Benbow make their way out of the shrubbery, an owl brushes past them, and Benbow suddenly discovers Popeye "crouching against him, clawing at his pocket and hissing through his teeth like a cat". Popeye shuns the natural because he is afraid that it uncovers the elemental which is deep-seated in his own responses. His use of the corncob for the infamous rape
is ironic, as he depends on an object of nature and a symbol of fertility to perform an unnatural deed. The descriptions of Popeye during his ritualistic calls on Temple at the whore-house provide glimpses of the elemental in him. As he hovers over the youthful figure in an orgy of passion, his vulnerability is exposed in the anguished face, the drooling saliva, and the "bluish lips protruding as though he were blowing upon hot soup, making a high whinnying sound like a horse". The primitive strain appears in its most disguised form in Flem. He is the most successful in sublimating the elemental for his frozen façade registers no response. The man as the Yoknapatawpha county viewed him when he first landed at Jefferson's Frenchman's Bend in his cloth-cap white shirt and the microscopic bowtie, remains identical in appearance, as the community witness in consternation, his accumulations of wealth at the alarming rate. And to complement the sameness of his attire he maintains an inscrutable front, his face being always: "as blank as a pan of uncooked dough", his eyes, "the colour of stagnant water" and the "rhythmically chewing jaw". Flem's face is his fortification against his own impotence and the debility of his folk-culture. His marriage to Eula, the daughter of the most prestigious man in the county, despite the knowledge of her pregnancy, is conspicuous as an endeavour to efface his own vulnerability. And ironically enough Eula happens to be the paragon of femininity, being voluptuous and wanton. The barrenness in Flem
is exquisitely projected through a focus on the landscape, as the man and his bride are viewed on their way back home after the honeymoon:

It was now September. The cotton was open and spilling into the fields; the very air smelled of it. In fields after field as he passed along the pickers, arrested in stooping attitudes, seemed fixed amid the constant surf, the long, partly-filled sacks streaming away behind them like rigid frozen flags. The air was hot, vivid and breathless - a final fierce concentration of the doomed and dying summer. Flem's exposure to this over-abundance of fertility in nature instills within him a deeper awareness of his own infertility. And yet throughout the journey his face does not record a moment's wavering. As the carriage passes by, the glimpse of his face shows "his eyes darkly impenetrable, quizzical and bemused, remembering," and even after the carriage disappears out of sight, there remains a vision of "the straw bag, the minute tie and the constant jaw". Flem's dissociation with his folk culture is complete in his elaborate eschewal of Mink. What he despises in his cousin is what he despises in his own community, the incompetence and the vulnerability to the elemental. By exterminating Mink, Flem wishes to eradicate the stigma of his folk culture. It is only when his strategic venture to eliminate Mink fails, despite the fact that it is almost fool-proof, it is then that he realises

that in Mink, he faces the indomitable in human kind.
Flem knows that the elemental which he has managed to
abrogate within himself with those city clothes and that
impervious air, is ultimately bound to accost him. When
Mink finally does encroach with a pistol in his hand,
Flem, aware of his fate, is yet able to receive his cousin
with the same enigmatic silence:

the little bow tie might have been the same one he
had been wearing forty years ago behind the counter in
Varner's store, the shirt a white city shirt and the pants
dark city pants too and the shoes polished city shoes instead
of farmer's brogans. But no different, really: not reading,
just sitting there with his feet propped and his hat on,
his jaw moving faintly and steadily as if he were chewing. 23
It seems as though Flem had recognised long since the
superficiality of his own stance and had been waiting to be
ferreted out by one of his own clan. All three, Sutpen,
Popeye and Flem, face a similar end, for they are ultimately
sought out and slaughtered by the community. Sutpen is
tracked down and brutally killed against the backdrop of
his own 'hundred' by one of his own 'po white trash',
but by a man infinitely inferior to him. As his murderer,
Wash Jones, waits outside on the gallery beside "the very
post where the scythe had leaned rusting for two years",

in a trance-like state he perceives the advent of his quarry:

... the proud galloping image merge and pass, galloping through avatars which marked the accumulation of years, time, to the fine climax where it galloped without weariness or progress, forever and forever immortal ... 24

The fall of Sutpen in the hands of Wash Jones marks his final surrender to the elemental. Sutpen's design requires that he disregard the elemental, and in the pursuit of his dream, he precipitates his own death. Popeye, who enacts the role of ruler of the underworld, and has an impressive record of accomplishments to his credit such as business in illicit liquor, gambling, the murder of an infirm, the rape of a judge's daughter, the arrest and lynch of an innocent, is finally sentenced to death in Birmingham on a charge of having murdered a policeman. And the irony of it all is that "they arrested him for killing a man in one town and at an hour when he was in another town killing somebody else". Popeye's move towards his own immolation appears volitioned for he had begun to recognise himself as a man "who made money and had nothing he could do with it, spend it for, since he knew that alcohol would kill him like poison, who had no friends and had never known a woman and knew he could never". His sole irrevocable tie with

the natural lay in his attachment to his mother whom he would visit every summer. And it is on one of these ritualistic trips back home that Popeye is waylaid by the authorities. Once under arrest, his reluctance to contact a lawyer to defend himself or communicate with the priest who comes to minister to his wants, indicates the stolidity with which he meets his death. There is no flicker of misgiving as he stands at the moment of his execution; "rigid, as though he had an egg balanced on his head. "Fix my hair, Jack!" he said."

In all three novels the hunt image is deliberately invoked at the close in order to project individual pursuits in prismatic images. Sutpen, Flem and Popeye face an identical fate in self-immolation as they strive toward the fulfillment of their designs. They are, at once, demoniac in their repudiation of the elemental, and heroic in their struggle against the indestructible. The grim mask which each affects in confronting his own end, discloses a reckoning with the reducible and the immutable forces of existence. The comic grotesquerie of their insensate wallowing in violence is called to review in the individual's cognition of his own impotence at death. The image of the hunt suggests that for each of these characters death culminates in an ultimate release. In Absalom Absalom, the mythic is invoked to convey this experience and yet it functions, in ironic inversion, to underline the myopic...
vision of Sutpen. In *Sanctuary* and *The Mansion* the tragic element is deliberately undercut with the use of caricature.

A sense of the primitive pervades over the entire Yoknapatawpha region and is discernible in the moods and motions of the community. In Faulkner's novels, communal participation is evoked as a tribally shared rhythm, for the community often functions as an animated backdrop for the delineation of individual anarchic responses. The communal response which remains arrested in the background provides a time perspective for the individual experience. Being ever in a state of flux it conveys a sense of continuity. A coordinated series of group reflexes contributes to a sense of survival in time. The primitive preoccupation with time follows a process of externalisation based on experience in nature. Through periodic rituals the community imposes order on spontaneous impulses in individuals. In Faulkner's novels the image of pursuit, as collective participation, is projected in kinesthetic motion. The white and black communities are not posed in contrast to infer racial distinctions. The community as one whole, appears to function as a measure for the individual's response to time.

The black community's religious experience is a rationalisation of elemental. Group participation in the sermons and the songs generates a wave of intensity. The emotional miasma finds its outlet in exultant outbursts and
wild gestures. In *The Sound and The Fury*, the Negro church service that comes towards the end of the novel, seems to represent the stasis, the aftermath of violence. The communal response is juxtaposed beside the collapse of Southern aristocracy, symbolised in the dissipation of the Compsons, to evoke a sense of continuity. Yet at the same time the stasis of the communal response is insinuated in the reference to the backdrop. A description of the natural setting where the church lies, conveys the stuntedness of a collective response. As Dilsey the domestic at the Compson household, approaches, chaperoning Benjy, the Compson idiot, the scene appears:

... like a painted backdrop. Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a mid-morning filled with bells. Toward the, church they thronged with slow sabbath deliberation.

The image of the road, like a cut ribbon, the scene as "flat and without perspective" and the juxtaposition of the church against "the windy sunlight of space and April" indicate the artist's preliminary exploration of spatial and temporal dimensions. The descriptions of the road and April suggest

time-bound responses. The crowd which moves with "slow sabbath deliberation" becomes momentarily transformed into a wild éclat of swaying bodies and moaning voices in a communal resurrection of "immolation and abnegation and time". The central focus during the entire service remains on the minister, the man who controls the mass psyche. Puny in appearance, with a face 'like a small aged monkey' and a posture 'hunched over upon itself like that of one long immured in striving with the implacable earth', the man holds the instrument of control in his voice. The choral chants and the reiterated expulsions in the prolonged "Mmmmmm" signify the ritualistic controls over an inordinate response. The experience comes through as one communal act of purgation and once over, one finds "the dispersing congregation talking easily again group to group".

In *The Sound and The Fury* the temporal dimension of the communal response is more subtly delineated than in the earlier novel *Soldier's Pay*. Faulkner's concern with the hierarchy of responses is evident from the first novel *Soldier's Pay* which ends with a glimpse into a shabby Negro church in which the dim glow of the lamp casts the darkness into deeper shades "'making thicker the imminence of sex after harsh labour along the mooned land; and from it welled the crossing submerged passion of the dark race'". This image is juxtaposed directly against the frozen images of the Vector and Gilligan who
stop by to witness the scene. Being an earlier novel the contrast is too direct to be effective, and even the evocation of time in the image of the road "under the moon, vaguely dissolving without perspective" appears too obvious to be artistic. In fact the contrast has been so clearly delineated that some critics have been led to believe that Soldier's Pay ends on a note of affirmation in the Negro church experience. Nilon views it thus:

It is the Negroes who sing in their rude church who provide for Gilligan, through the emotional quality of their singing, a spiritual contrast to the hardship of their daily lives, an understanding of his experience. Time and space perspectives suggest that Faulkner's art does not appear to concern itself with the projection of values with reference to communities. The contrasts probe beyond the moral surface to insinuate an aesthetic experience. The glimpse into the Negro church is from without and not within, which, in itself indicates that for the rector and Gilligan it provides an insight into the "submerged passion of the dark race". The darkness and the heat that emanates from the shabby portals appears to circumscribe the worshippers within the nimbus of their condition. The mooned land carries the impress of the condition which is steeped in the elemental "inevitable with tomorrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation." The word 'damnation' does infer a

moral judgement but denotes a state of stasis. The use of the word is ironic, for the damnation of this condition is generated from within. For the rector, this experience is an acknowledgement of the elemental. All his life the rector has struggled to fortify himself against the elemental within. The cultivated garden, the carefully tended rose bush and the pruned line of poplars indicate that the only form of nature he can respond to is a synthetic one. For Gilligan, the church experience is a moment of reckoning. It is at once an exposure to the intensity of the natural impulse in the church-goers as well as to the myopic stance of the rector. Gilligan aware of his own inhibitions sees himself as living off the surface of experience. As the two figures turn toward the direction of town "feeling dust in their shoes" they pay a silent tribute to the elemental. The final scene is used to portray a hierarchy of responses. Being Faulkner's first novel the man and nature correspondences are too conclusive and appear to lack subtlety.

The Negro church service in *Light in August* is yet another evocation of an elemental response. The word 'cavelike' to describe the interior is an invocation to the primeval. As Joe Christmas breaks into the church during the service, with his hands "raised like a preacher", the pandemonium that follows is caused by an elemental fear in
the audience. The image of Joe amidst the community provides a perspective in time. The wave-like fear and terror let loose amongst the churchgoers as they brace themselves to face the physical threat in Joe provides a sense of continuity. This movement proves to be yet another in the series of crises that Joe undergoes. The communal response represents continuity because the elemental response is roused by external forces. For Joe, time is internalised through a process of dissociation. His acts of violence appear to be his means of purgating himself of the elemental. In *Light in August* the Negro church service is better integrated into the structure of the novel than the final scene in *Soldier's Pay*.

The most dramatic image of the black response appears in the exodus in *The Unvanquished*. It starts out as a tumultuous horde and peters out into a handful of the aged and the ailing. The mass response follows a crescendo-like movement and the focus falls on the procession during the aftermath, once the passion and the fury has already been spent. The image of the road marks their passage in time. The physical immobility of the crowd at the end, marks the stasis of their condition. Like their journey which fails to take them to a destination, their responses too  lose intensity beyond the given moment. The image of pursuit functions in ironic inversion. The movement is imagined to be in the direction of Jordan and the dream of the sacred Jordan is held in suspension throughout the journey to represent the image of the Holy Grail.
A brief comparison with the black communal response as depicted by Baldwin provides us with an insight into Faulkner's artistic intent. Baldwin too shows a fascination for the black response to religion. One finds that the church experience features in several of his works. In Go Tell it on the Mountain, the climactic rise of voices and passion, to the young boy who witnesses the performance at the church service appears as "fire, or flood, or judgement. Then the church seemed to swell with the Power it held and like a planet rocking in space, the temple rocked with the Power of God". Though Baldwin uses an added perspective in the image of the boy, his focus rests on empathetic evocation. The emotional quality of the language almost proves to be its burden. Baldwin fails to achieve aesthetic distancing through the boy's perspective. The description which is one of many in a similar vein appears to lack temporal dimension. The author's view of the church is from within rather than without and as a result the distinction in human responses to time are blurred rather than delineated with clarity.

In Faulkner's novels, the white community, in the form of the lynch mob, is seen to function most effectively as a perspective in time. The exhibitionist violence endorsed by this ritual is the white man's means of rationalizing the elemental response. By casting the victim to the flames,
the primitive hoped to:

... promote the growth of the crops and the welfare of man and beast, either positively by stimulating them, or negatively by averting the dangers and calamities. The conflagration whipped up by the inner compulsions projects the white communal response in dual perspective. The lynch mob is seen to wallow in this act of violence because it feels the need to assert its own virility in the larger culture. At the same time their pursuit appears as a purgation of the taint of slavery and miscegenation. The outstanding feature of Faulkner's portrayals is that he evokes the response without imposing the ethical framework. His use of perspective and his exploration of space and time in shifting images are his specific controls for devaluing the moral content. A comparative study of the image of the mob as viewed in *Light in August* and that of in *Intruder in the Dust* provides an insight into the growing aesthetic concern. In *Light in August* there are cursory references to the crowd. As the community gathers to witness Joe's trial, the author focusses on the inscrutability of visage. Lined up, row on row, the crowd consists of "faces rapt and empty and immobile as the faces of cows, approaching and drifting on to be replaced". The expression, rapt and empty implies it to be an affected front for disguising

the elemental within. The word "immobile" is an index to the stasis of their condition. The analogy with "cows" reduces their stature to that of animals to underline the passivity of their appearance to contrast with the wild passions within. The motions of the crowd "approaching and drifting on to be replaced" provides a sense of continuity. The depiction of the crowd in Light in August shows tremendous potential but the references are too perfunctory to evoke a sustained sense of time.

There are references to the lynch mob in several of Faulkner's works. In the earlier novels there is a sameness in the presentation of the crowd. In Intruder in the Dust, the lynch mob acquires magnificent proportions. The successive images of the crowds gathering at the Square sets the pace for the varying levels of response in Chick. As they slowly dribble in to fill the Square, the young boy begins to identify familiar faces, yet at the same time he also recognises the fact that these are:

... the men who his uncle said were in every little Southern town, who never really led mobs nor even instigated them but were always the nucleus of them because of their mass availability.

The occasion is at the beginning of the novel, when Lucas

28. W.F., Intruder in the Dust, p.42
is escorted in the sheriff's car to the county jail and the community gathers at the Square to catch a passing glimpse of him. Chick, who is also among them, is noticed by Lucas and singled out for instructions. The subtlety of art emerges from this placing of Chick amidst the crowd and yet retaining the sense of perspective through him. The distancing and the intensity of response are synchronised at every stage. The second occasion when Chick views the mob is from the rear window of his uncle's car. Here the men appear to have acquired masks and all the masks are identical, no longer faces:

... but a Face: not even ravening nor unsatiated but just in motion, insensate, vacant of thought or even passion: an Expression significantless and without past like the one which materializes suddenly after seconds or even minutes of painful even frantic staring from the innocent: juxtaposition of trees clouds and landscape in the soap-advertisement puzzle-picture.29 Chick's increased involvement in the truth of the black man's innocence contributes to the process of dissociation from his own culture canon. For the young adolescent it proves to be the period of disenchantment, and this accounts for the dehumanized image of the mob depicted as "just in motion, insensate, vacant of thought," and their vacuity

29. Ibid., pp. 175-176.
of purpose is exquisitely conveyed in the "innocent juxtaposition". Faulkner's control over the language is evident in the simultaneous projections of the qualitative and the quantitative in the shifting images of the mob and the growing awareness in the boy. The uncle's verbalisations and the process of crystallisation in the boy run diatonically, so that they seem to sound as one voice. The transformation within is projected in the discourse that takes places after witnessing the disintegration of the mass. The uncle offers to rationalize it thus:

... because there is a simple numerical point at which a mob cancels and abolishes itself, may be because it has finally got too big for darkness, the cave it was spawned in is no longer big enough to conceal it from light and so at last whether it will or no it has to look at itself.

The words 'cave' spawned and 'darkness' are the indicators of the elemental response that leers behind the "Face" of the mob. But the uncle here merely underlines the level of response. The image of the crowd in the closing pages is an endorsement of the final integration. The perspective takes a shift in stance for we find Chick glancing down at the community from the elevation of his

30. Ibid., p.194
uncle's study window. The view of the landscape and the image of the community are integrated to provide a sense of continuity. The rendering shifts between the seen, the apprehended and the realized. Temporal perspectives in Faulkner's later work indicates a greater involvement in the communal response.

A comparison between the depiction of the mob in Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* proves useful in enumerating stylistic distinctions. Twain's description of the dramatic surrender of a virulent crowd to a request from the sole voice of Colonel Sherburn is endearing and amusing. Behind the author's ironic stance lies an incisive insight into the ways of the mob. But Twain's use of the community appears to be mainly thematic. The mob has a purpose and place in the dichotomy of good and evil. The evocations of reality and illusion, nature and civilization, exposure and escape indicate that Twain's concern is ethical. In Faulkner's novels, the wavering gestures of the crowd are deftly impressed without any moral overtones. The lynch mob in *Intruder in the Dust*, as it gathers and cancels itself in its very numbers, is projected to follow the process of evolution. The depiction of the crowd displays Faulkner's use of space and time. Though the mob continues to survive in
chronological time, the stasis of its condition springs from the ephemeral quality of the response.

Irene Edmonds attempts to resolve the black and white dichotomy in Faulkner's novels. She claims that the author's intent lies in a portrayal of the human condition. She argues that:

What Faulkner has done is to present situations and reserve any personal judgement. He does not write social protest. He describes the condition of the Negro as he sees it in all its bitter sordidness - the poverty, the never-ending subordination, the 'nigger-baiting, nigger-hating' atmosphere, the injustice of the whites. On the white side of the ledger, he pictures the pathological fear of 'black blood'; the lusting after Negro women, the morbid preoccupations with the imagined details of real or spurious rape committed by the Negroes, the exaltation of Southern womanhood; the perverse love and hate for the Negro. 31

Irene Edmonds assessment of Faulkner's presentation as distinct from the mode of social protest appears valid. Yet her claim that 'he describes the condition of the Negro' or that 'he pictures the pathological fear' in the white, seems to underrate the complexity of Faulkner's art. In his novels the white and the black do not appear

merely as representations of the human condition. His artistic use implicates the fusion of both in the common elemental response and the common perspective in continuity. Faulkner probes beyond the condition, white or black, in order to explore the response. His novels show that the condition is generated by the response. All those who believe themselves to be caught within the condition are viewed as the "volitionless servants of fatality" for they are invariably overwhelmed by external forces that stifle their individuality. Though the condition is projected in motion, the instinctual response underlines the overall stasis. The condition is not deterministic but self-wrought by the individual's inability to overcome social constraints or natural inhibitions.

Faulkner uses the image of pursuit to provide a structure for the elemental response. The pace of pursuit in each work is set by the control of temporal and spatial dimensions. Olga Vickery comments on his recurring use of the hunt in the stories of Go Down Moses. She believes that:

"In each case, the hunt illuminates some facet of the relationship between whites and negroes, whether personal or social. At the same time a number of suggested parallels indicate that the significance of the ritual of the hunt is determined by the nature of the hunted as well as the hunters." 32

32. Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, pp.124-125
Olga Vickery limits herself to a discussion of the hunt as it functions in the single work. Her interpretation suggests that the author's presentation is not merely based on sociopsychic considerations. But her approach appears restrictive for she does not explore Faulkner's use of temporal and spatial perspectives in the projection of the hunt. The individual and the community in Faulkner's novels are dramatized by the image of the pursuer and the pursued. When Olga Vickery states that the significance of the hunt is determined by "the nature of the hunted as well as the hunter's" she does not specify that the conflict appears to arise from the tension in time.

Faulkner's use of the hunt image suggests that his preoccupation with pursuit extends beyond the primeval experience. His concern with the textures of response indicates that the hunt, in the modern context, though shorn of the primitive paraphernalia, signifies men's pursuit of the Man.