Nature evocations in Faulkner's novels have led most critics to conclude that they reflect the intimacy of a nature lover and the perspicacity of a keen observer. This chapter undertakes a probe beyond the surface semblance of reality in a bid to discover deeper meanings in his nature manifestations. The development of Faulkner's art indicates a move towards a closer alignment between the creative impulse in nature and in man. It would perhaps be logical to infer that this romantic association springs from a typically Southern neurosis. The Southerner's preoccupation with his past has been accounted for by sociologists. Robert Hazel, among those elect who had isolated themselves as the literary voice of the South, interprets the cultural climate thus:

Forced by a calamitous history to an artificially arrested and stunted condition, to the curious state of a living anachronism, the South ... a view of the human condition in its extremes: Not simply piety, but fundamental wrath, not poverty alone, but squalor, and not merely the consciousness of history, but the crushing weight of a personal past. 33

Hazel's insight into the Southern condition has relevance to Faulkner's nature portrayals. A study of

Faulkner's maturing art reveals the transition from a preoccupation with the human condition to a concern with the rendering of it. In his novels, the human condition is not evoked in its socio-psychic context merely. It does not remain static as "arrested and stunted"; it appears as a state of flux controlled by human responses to time. The invocation to fertility, as embodied in natural settings and female forms, indicates a concern with the mythic response. A close scrutiny of the mythic response reveals the paradox in a state of survival on one hand and the stasis of the condition on the other. The stasis springs from the individual's failure to resolve man's place in time. The mythic response is that which seeks release and rebirth in a total abandonment to nature and the cyclic image of time. This chapter is an exploration of the image of fertility in Faulkner's novel to discover the variations in the mythic response.

From the first novel Faulkner shows a preoccupation with the image of the earth and the image of womanhood. In Soldier's Pay, his earliest nature descriptions exhibit the efforts to relate the environment to the human condition. The references to the spring season and the inexorable urge in nature are too explicit to be missed. The flagrant backdrop is evoked again and again in the
image of fertility. While the innumerable reiterations of the myriad bees, the delirious sparrows, the apple-bloom and the honeysuckle appear too contrived, the tenor of a change in season is most effectively expressed through an analogy with the titillating ebullience of females. The description reads as:

And so April became May ... and flowers bloomed like girls ready for a ball, then dropped in the languorous fulsome heat like girls after the ball; when earth like a fat woman recklessly trying giddy hat after hat, trying trimming of apple and pear and peach, threw it away; tried narcissi and jonquil and flag; threw it away - so early flowers bloomed and passed and later flowers bloomed to fade and fall giving place to yet later ones. In Soldier's Pay, the garden its radiant array of blossoms, lilies violets, magnolia and morning glory, embodies the tantalizing exoticism of women. Its function lies in a direct interaction with the characters, explicitly enunciated in the torrid relationship between the rector and the rose bush. Joe Gilligan's discomfort in the garden speaks of his constraints in sex. When amidst flowers:

... he always felt as if he had entered a room full of women; he was always conscious of his body, of his walk, feeling as though he trod in sand. So he believed that he really did not like flowers.35

34. W.F. Soldier's Pay, p.234.
35. Ibid; p.87
Joe's hypersensitivity is vividly conveyed through the image of "treading on sand". His extreme self-consciousness in contact with the natural environment or the object of love is in sharp contrast to the liberties taken by Janarius Jones and George Farr's total self-abandonment. Being the first attempt, the associations between man and nature lack artistry for there are too many and they appear limited in implication. In the novels that follow, one finds that the focus falls on a single image of the backdrop. The studied references to the cloying sweetness of honeysuckle in *The Sound and the Fury*, the luscious heaven-tree in *Sanctuary*, the twice-bloomed wistaria in *Absalom, Absalom*, and the silver immobility of the burgeoning pear tree in *The Hamlet*, indicate a more controlled use of the natural scene. Faulkner's artistic purpose may be gauged from a comparison between the rose bush in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and the heaven-tree in *Sanctuary*. Both these images from nature are placed in a strategic position beside the prison. The function of the rose bush appears limited in *The Scarlet Letter*, for it is purely thematic. It exists in a one to one correspondence with an individual for it extends a mock salute to the surfeit of passion in Hestor. The heaven-tree in *Sanctuary*, though it stands in isolation at the corner of the jail yard, is integrated into the
surface of the setting as well as to the texture of man's experience in life. In its simulation of the human condition it evokes a variety of responses. In the following passage the heaven-tree is viewed in immediacy in the response of the man behind the bars and in perspective in Horace's reaction:

... clinging to the bars, gorilla-like, singing, while upon his shadow, upon the checkered orifice of the window, the ragged grief of the heaven-tree would pulse and change the last bloom fallen now in viscid smears upon the sidewalk. Horace turned again in the bed. "They ought to clean that damn mess off the sidewalk", he said.

Faulkner's focus is on the heaven-tree and on the movement of 'pulse and change'. The variation in human responses to time is evoked in the image of the prisoner. The stasis of his condition does not arise from his state of imprisonment. His posture, "clinging to the bars, gorilla-like" signifies that his passions are time-bound. Horace's response which follows immediately after, infers that it is directed not to the heaven-tree alone, but to the aggregate of man and nature. Horace appears to recognise and reject the surfeit of passion in the heaven-tree and the elemental quality of response in the prisoner. In

36. W.F. Sanctuary, p.130.
wanting to have that "damn mess" removed from his sight, he desires to shut himself off from the elemental in life. The image of the heaven tree dramatizes the underlying conflict in Horace between the instinctual and the rational.

The image of the honeysuckle in *The Sound and The Fury*, the wisteria in *Absalom, Absalom*, and the pear tree in *The Hamlet* are used to evoke human responses in time. In *The Sound and the Fury*, the honeysuckle features constantly in Quentin's reminiscences. Quentin appears to succumb to the overwhelming scent of the honeysuckle in as much as he shuns sensuality in life. The honeysuckle seems to control the pace of response in him and it is evoked as the apparent force that drives Quentin to self-immolation. Quentin's response to time oscillates between the personal and the chronological. On the occasion when his father hands over to him the watch that belonged to his grandfather the words, "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it", reverberate in Quentin's mind. The conflict which drives the boy to suicide is between the image of time-external and time-personal. Quentin is torn between the burden of his family's past and his own response which vacillates between impulse and reason. His deliberations
over suicide suggest his preoccupation with a mythic release. The overt reference to the Christ legend, while Quentin broods beside the river, is an invocation to myth, in order to qualify the act of immolation that follows. The use of the surface of water for Quentin's suicide further corroborates the mythic analogy. The image of the twice-bloomed wistaria is evoked again and again in Absalom, Absalom. It grows on a wooden trellis just outside the Goldfield home, but in the novel it is used to insinuate a level of response in Miss Rosa. She too, like Quentin, appears to wallow in the sensuality of that over-sweet bloom. She strains to project her own self into the image of fertility. As she recounts her experiences to Quentin her mind wanders back to that summer which she describes as a mythic legend:

Once there was (they can not have told you this either) a summer of wistaria. It was a pervading everywhere of wistaria (I was fourteen then) as though of all springs yet to capitulate condensed into one spring, one summer: the spring and summer time which is every female's who breathed above dust, beholden of all betrayed springs held over from all irrevocable time, repercussed, bloomed again. It was a vintage year of wistaria: vintage year being that sweet conjunction of root bloom and urge and hour and weather. 37

37. W.F. Absalom, Absalom., pp. 143-144.
The image of the wistaria which appears to be held in suspension over the scene in *Absalom, Absalom*, controls the responses in Miss Rosa. It denotes the stasis which hangs as a pall over the house in the odour of the over-bloomed. The passage illustrates how Miss Rosa relies on the image of the wistaria to rationalize an intensely sensual response. The invocation to the mythic is in the telescoping of the seasons condensed into one spring, one summer, and above which the image of the wistaria is viewed as "'held over from all irrevocable time, repercussed, bloomed again'". All the references to the wistaria indicate a sameness of response. In *The Hamlet* the references to the pear tree appear obtrusive in the section entitled *The Peasants*. The image of the pear tree in bloom, "'like drowned silver'", the image of the moon, "'almost full, tremendous and pale,'" and the reiterations of the mockingbird's song, suggest that the mythic referent lies in the image of fertility. The folk belief in the fertilising moon is ridiculed by Will Varner in the tall tale:

So there was a old woman told my mammy once that if a woman showed her belly to the full moon after she had done caught, it would be a gal. So Mrs. Varner taken and laid every night with the moon on her nekid belly,
until it fulled and after. I could lay my ear to her belly and hear Eula kicking and scrouging like all get-out, feeling the moon. 38

This passage is significant for it implicates the image of fertility in Eula, insinuating that she were born into a state of fertility. The image of the pear tree rising 'in mazed and silver immobility like exploding snow' conveys a condition of stasis. The image of Eula is juxtaposed beside the image of the pear tree. As she stands at the window, her condition is deftly impressed on the silhouette:

... the heavy gold hair, the mask not tragic and perhaps not even doomed: just damned, the strong faint life of breasts beneath marble like fall of the garment. 39

The use of the word 'mask' signifies the effacement of responses in Eula's visage. The qualification of her state as 'not even doomed: just damned', underlines her inertia and the immutability of response. Like Quentin, Eula too, seeks mythic release in the act of suicide.

The use of the honeysuckle, the heaven tree, the twice-bloomed wistaria and the pear tree indicate Faulkner's preliminary assay to focus on one image of nature for the

39. Ibid., p.311.
evocation of a response. But the mythic fertility endemic to each of these images restricts the scope to a specific response in time. The successive references to the image do not record a simultaneous change in response, so that, the response to the image remains identical from the beginning till the end.

Faulkner's sketches of sex and setting in the earlier novels reveals his commitment to the irrevocable ties between man and nature. In Soldier's Pay, the tender fairy tale romance of the child lovers Donald and his schoolmate Emmy unfolds beside the creek in a dizzy whorl of moonlit sky, wet grass and magic reflections in the water. Even more representative is the description of the swamp in Mosquitoes, the backdrop for Pat and David's love escapade. The vacuity of the experience is etched heavily on a surface which no longer remains as trees or mist or swamp but culminates in a response as in the passage below:

Trees heavy and ancient with moss loomed out of it hugely and grayly: the mist might have been a sluggish growth between and among them. No, this mist might have been the first prehistoric morning of time itself; it might have been the very substance in which the seed of the beginning of things fecundated; and these huge and
silent trees might have been the first of living things, too recently born to know either fear or astonishment, dragging their sluggish umbilical cords from out the old miasmic womb of a nothingness latent and dreadful.  

Through this description the author effectively conveys the entombment of youthful ebullience in the stasis of self-incurred inhibitions. The use of such words as "prehistoric", "fecundated", "miasmic", shows that the artist uses the setting for the rendering of an experience. But at this stage the language appears to encumber rather than evoke. Pat and David's freakish bid to elope turns out to be nothing more than a spurious return to the primeval. And curiously enough the mythic pattern is followed, for their journey to and from the swamp takes place in a passage through water. In the novels that follow the juxtapositions appear more subdued as in The Sound and the Fury, the clandestine suicide pact beside the branch. As Quentin approaches the appointed spot he responds to the drizzle of honeysuckle, the rasping of crickets and the image of his sister:  

... in that vacuum of crickets like a breath travelling across a mirror she was lying in the water her head on the sand pit the water flowing about her hips there was little more light in the water her skirt half saturated flopped along her flanks to the water's motion in heavy ripples going nowhere renewed themselves of their own movement.  

The passage aims at more than description; it implicates a hierarchy of responses. The distinction lies in the girl's total abandon and Quentin's fluctuating waves of reason and emotion. In *As I Lay Dying*, Dewey Dell's indomitable passion for fulfillment is heightened by her proximity to the wilderness as she experiences "the woods getting closer and closer and the secret shade" on that fateful day when she yields to life. Even in *Light in August*, Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden's grotesque love-play is enacted in the garden under the wavering moon. Ike, the half-wit's prurient cravings for the cow is deliberately transcribed against such exhortative constants as the fertilising moon and the profligate earth. The idiot's adventure with his beloved is wrought within the image of the earth "overblown like that of a receptive mare for the rampant crash" and the rain "concentrated, dropping in narrow unperpendicular bands in two or three different places at one time, about the horizon, like gauzy umbilical loops from the bellied cumulæ, the sun-belled ewes of summer grazing up the wind from the south west". The ludicrousness of this juxtaposition begins to acquire significance when one begins to place the idiot's response within the mythic framework. Gleenath Brooks calls attention to this when he claims Ike Snopes to be "more mythic" than Eula or Flem and defines him as "... a kind of pure quantity - pure adoration, pure love of nature, pure
responsiveness, without inhibitions, responsibilities or self-consciousness'. In The Hamlet, the artist's preoccupation remains centred around the mythic response. But he does not attempt anything beyond varying it in degrees in Ike, Eula and Flem.

In the earlier novels nature operates more largely as setting than toward the evocation of response. The response to nature, in Soldier's Pay and Mosquitoes, is perfunctory and reflects a lack of artistic resolution. In certain novels such as Sanctuary, The Hamlet, the mythic image of fertility is used to provide structural unity. The lush landscape, as the backdrop for the idiot's love idylls in The Hamlet, is extravagantly mythic. In the maturer works such as The Wild Palms, The Bear and Intruder in the Dust, the extent of involvement in nature is projected in spatial dimensions. In the maturer works the mythic response does not remain in isolation; it appears to be integrated within a hierarchy of responses. The image of the threshing palms, the vanishing wilderness and the shifting countryside in these novels no longer denote a single response in stasis. The mythic scope is widened to function as the referential base for a series of responses.

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in more than one individual. Besides, in the later works, Faulkner displays a superb control in the treatment of the setting and the use of experiential and visual space. In the chapters that follow there is an attempt to relate the landscape of the maturer works to a widening vision.

This chapter undertakes a scrutiny of the Faulknerian females in order to trace the alignment between the mythic in nature and the mythic response. A study of female characters in his novels reveals that they mainly appear in the form of the voluptuous Lilith-figure in their containment of fertility and the aggressive anti-feminist in the repudiation of fertility. In these portrayals of the female the author does not merely concern himself with a vivification of the creative principle. The artistic focus is on the individual’s response rather than the embodiment of fertility. Karl Zink in a survey of females in Faulkner’s novels, asserts that the author presents woman as "a manifestation of Nature". He classifies female characters in Faulkner’s works under four heads "old women", "good women", "musing maidens", and "few renegades". Zink’s definition of woman as "a manifestation" and his categories indicate a preoccupation with the façade. Zink shows an awareness of Faulkner’s
Faulkner's deep commitment to flux and change helps explain his unusual women. Yet he fails to account for the author's evocation of time in his study of the female. His discussion centres around the characteristics rather than on the responses to 'flux and change'. Faulkner's focus appears to be in evocation of human responses rather than in character sketches. This study undertakes a probe of the visage of Faulkner's woman in order to realise the artistic principle.

The author's preoccupation with the rites of fertility and the regenerative impulse in women is evident from the tentative association with trees in the early novels. Cecily's fragility of frame and pliancy of movements is compared on several occasions to the imperceptible strength of the popular and the mythic is induced in her being which seems, "nourished by sunlight and honey until even digestion was a beautiful function". The ironic strain which is obtrusive in Faulkner's first novel accentuates her nascent womanhood through every coquettish gesture. In Mosquitoes, the contrasts are too absolute to be ignored. Patricia's "hard unsentimentality" and her flexibility in physical motions is likened to the poplar and the quality of her response is diametrically opposed to the 'soft placidity', 'a supine potential fecundity' in Jenny.

Jenny's response, too, is evoked in terms of nature for her placidity "bloomed like a heavy flower, pervading and rife like an odor lazier, heavier than that of lilies". The exuberance of youth is likened to the odour of trees in Patricia, an odour fresh and constant to denote motion. In Jenny, her innate passivity, is evoked in the odour of an over-ripe bloom with the use of such words as "pervading", "lazier", "heavier". The correspondence between the female and trees is reiterated in *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy's association of Caddy with trees represents an instinctive apprehension of a latent urge in his sister. But in these novels the identification between the female and nature is too intermittent to be effective. The artistic purpose does not appear to extend beyond an ironic exposure of fertility as endemic to the female condition. And yet in Cecily, Patricia, and Caddy, the quintessential charm lies in their fluctuating responses in conflict with the stasis of their condition. Maxwell Geismar identifies this category of women in Faulkner's novel as:

... apparently typical Scott Fitzgerald post-war flapper, thin, flat and emancipated, the prototype of the modern freedom of the sexes. But with Cecily and her Faulknerian sisters who follow her, his 'emancipation' is a euphemism for iniquity - To be free is apparently to be
vicious. If Cecily is socially equal, she is also sexually insatiable. Though Geismar's claim that in Faulkner's women, "emancipation is a euphemism for iniquity" may be adequately substantiated, one feels that the artistic intent extends beyond the representation of sin or virtue. The focus appears to rest on the response evoked rather than the act incurred. Besides Geismar's conclusion fails to account for the lasciviousness in Belle or Bula. Also to term Lena's misadventure with Lucas Burch as a move towards "emancipation" would be to outstretch the word. The feebleness of Lena's 'faux pas' cannot be placed on par with the vitality of Joanna Burden's freakish participation in love, even though these acts have a common base in iniquity. The figure of Addie in *As I Lay Dying* acquires greater potency than the earlier images of the "post-war flapper". Her identification with the "terrible blood, the red bitter flood boiling through the land", further aggravates the innate conflict between learned truth and experienced truth. Addie's crisis lies in the discovery of the hypocrisy of her own gestures and she seeks to remedy it through acts of aberration. Her flogging of school children, her abnormal relationship with her son, and her act of promiscuity with Reverend Whitfield appear

puny beside her grand gesture of triumph in death. Addie's journey in death to her family burial ground symbolizes the volition of her responses, and underlines the final act of redemption as opposed to her daughter's feebleness of gesture. In Dewey Dell is a more pronounced metaphoric expression of fertility than Jenny in Mosquitoes. And like Jenny, she serves as a foil to the level of conflict in Addie. Irving Howe criticizes Faulkner's presentation of Dewey Dell. He views her as one of the stereotypes of Southern fiction and remarks that she is "the one Bundren who fails to emerge clearly". Dewey Dell's function in this novella appears to have greater significance when reviewed in the context of responses rather than as character. The name itself suggests lushness and intimacy. Through a series of juxtapositions with the image of the lowing cow "the dead hot pale air", the pine clumps at a distance on a tilted slope, the artist evokes her responses as though she were, "a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth". Dewey Dell's stasis emanates from her vision of time as "the hard girdle in which lie the outraged entrails of events". The immobility of her gestures indicate that lack of conflict within. As the presaging moment of her sexual fulfillment draws near, Dewey Dell's response is evoked in the image of the row

upon row of cotton and the fast-filling sack as they pick together. On the burial journey, as they move towards their destination, she counts every mile that brings her closer to her personal mission. Crisis, for Dewey Dell, does not exist, for she meets the death of her mother, the knowledge of her own pregnancy, her failure in abortion, and the commitment of her brother to the lunatic asylum, with the same imperturbability. In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner explores the state of fertility and the variation in response through the portrayal of these two women. Yet the artistic intent appears to be obfuscated by the simultaneous striving to achieve a semblance of reality, which leads Irving Howe to term Dewey Dell, as typical of Southern womanhood. In *Light in August* there is a more explicit use of the mythic referent. The invocation to the earth goddess in Lena is unmistakable, including even in the name 'Grove'. Michael Millgate suggests that the two females in this novel are portrayed by Faulkner to represent the diametric images of the mythic Diana. He qualifies that Lena has

... much in common with that Ephesian Diana who was specifically an earth-mother, fertility figure; while Miss Burden has certain characteristics in common with the Roman Diana – notably her masculinity, her reputation for
virginity and her moon-like ebb and flow of passion as she and Christmas pass through all the different phases of their relationship.  

Millgate's analysis of the two women and their association with the two versions of Diana seems plausible to an extent. Yet Faulkner appears to suggest that the distinction does not lie in diverse qualities but in the variations of stasis and motion. Lena's impalement 'like something moving forever and without progress across an urn' signifies her inner immobility. Her responses are bound by an indomitable faith which she exercises indiscriminately. Through every gesture she appears to exude fertility as endorsed by Hightower who plays midwife in Lena's child-birth. Immediately after the delivery he pronounces judgement: 'More of them. Many more. That will be her life, her destiny.' This remark of Hightower's should not be taken as Faulkner's statement of her condition but rather as a reflection on her level of response. Lena's implicit faith renders her response as mythic and the act of engendering represents rebirth. The irony lies in her inability to recognise that her 'destiny' is self-invoked. Her identification with nature suggests that her apprehension of time is cyclic. And her failure to extricate herself from this image of time is subtly delineated in the stasis of her response.

which begins with and ends on the same banal note, 
"My, my. A body does get around". In contrast to Lena's placidity, Joanna's response is projected in motion in the image of "the two creatures that struggled in the one body like two moongleamed shapes struggling drowning in alternate throes upon the surface of a black thick pool beneath the last moon". The author deliberately uses nature imagery in descriptions of the torrid love affair between Joanna and Joe, in order to underline the unnaturalness of the passion. Faulkner's repeated references to the "dying summer" and "the import of autumn", and to the flood in its "flow and ebb" of time, show too heavy a reliance on the motions of nature for communicating the fluctuating responses of an individual. In Lena and Joanna, one finds that Faulkner uses the mythic referent for setting the pace of response. The contrast lies in their evocation of time. Lena's self-abandonment is unmistakably impressed in her posture ".. slow, deliberate, unhurried and tireless as augmenting afternoon itself". Joanna's apprehension of time is indicated in her growing awareness of her own crisis, implied in her introspection, "It was as if she knew somehow that time was short, that autumn was almost upon her, without knowing yet the exact significance of autumn". Joanna's actual crisis arises, not from her state of menopause which she wills to ignore, but in the
irreconcilable conflict between the forces of instinct and reason. Her abortive attempt to murder Joe represents her genuinely 'man-like' gesture to repudiate time. The shifts in Joanna's responses are spurred by the dialectical tension between her instinct which 'assured her that it would not harm her' and the terrifying awareness that 'she did not want to be saved'. Of the two characters though Lena emerges as the survivor, the author appears to endorse the act of repudiation in Joanna. The image of the column of smoke rising in an upward incline from the burning house, as viewed by Lena on her entry into Jefferson, ironically stands as an image of affirmation. In *Light in August* the contrasts are too laboured and the impact of variations in motion and stasis is destroyed rather than heightened by the imposition of symbols. Joanna's last name 'Burden' too obviously underlines the distinction between Lena's response to her state of pregnancy, and that of Joanna's to her burden in time.

*Sanctuary* represents Faulkner's most explicit reference to myth for the projection of fertility and the female response. Temple is most typical of the tradition of 'the post-war flapper'. She is identified by Geismar, as 'one of Cecily's Faulknerian sisters'. And yet she is the first in this line of women to be posed in specific mythic
analogies. Faulkner's use of the myth of Persephone in *Sanctuary* substantiates his earlier preoccupation with this image in the portrayals of Cecily, Patricia and Caddy. Earlier, he appeared to be groping for an appropriate art form for the projection of repudiation in response. The legend of the youthful Persephone, her abduction, her rape and her release by the ruler of the underworld, symbolises the regenerative activity of the earth through the process of dissemination, germination and burgeoning. This image of the alternating throes of fallow and fertility is used by Faulkner to represent the fluctuating responses in some of his women. One feels that the distinction in his portrayals of females lies in the projection of the state of response. He invokes the Diana myth in certain characters to suggest an inner stasis. The aura of inevitability that pervades over such women as Jenny, Dewey Dell and Lena Grove indicates their inability to extricate themselves from their own condition. Stasis in response becomes even more pronounced in some women of the later novels. The sketches of such women as Cecily, Patricia, Addie, Joanna show that Faulkner appears to be groping for a mythic counterpart. In *Temple* the correspondence is made explicit. All these characters radiate a vigour which does not merely emanate from their state of feminity but from the depths of response. The act
of rape, which these women appear to invite on themselves, in the mythic context acquires greater significance, for it becomes transformed into the profane means to a sacred end. All these women wallow in promiscuity with a reckless abandon for in it they seek self-fulfillment. Cecily Saunders perfidiously wanders from one male to another, titillating at the possibility of assault. Patricia nurses an inveterate desire for knowledge which she strives to find in sexual communion. Addie deliberately indulges in a heinous act for she believes it to be the passage to a benign end. Temple sets out in quest of social redemption in a pursuit of passion for passion's sake. In middle-age Joanna begins to lust for sex in a wild splurge to assert her incorruptibility. In all the stories the fluctuating response radiates from the female's confrontation with the death in life existence, and the act of rape which is self-precipitated, is transformed into a bid to repudiate this condition.

The myth of Persephone is meticulously followed in the thematic concern of Sanctuary. It is the story of a pretty and frivolous college girl who, in the midst of an escapade, discovers herself in the underworld of Frenchman's Creek. Temple's rape, her abduction and her final reinstatement has unmistakably mythic reverberations. And
yet the claim that the myth is used for elevation of Temple's character by casting her in the light of Persephone, would fail to account for the underlying irony. Her inexorable flaunt and her easy accessibility are presented paradoxically to force a redefinition of the term 'innocence'. Besides the exaggerated use of irony in the symbol of the corncob and the mock trial at the end indicates that the function of irony lies in deflation. Throughout the novel the artistic focus appears to rest on the experience of rape. And in the various evocations of Temple's responses it emerges as an act of release rather than as an act of violation. One scene which exquisitely depicts the conflict in Temple, is the drive to Memphis with her escort Popeye. The fluctuating responses in the girl is matched with the changing speed of the automobile as it passes through a variety of surfaces. The constants in the shifting landscape appear in the image of the road which continues "to flee backward under the wheels as onto a spool" and "the vagrant air of April and May". Though Temple seems composed as she sits beside Popeye gazing dully at the road, the emotional turbulence within, finds a momentary outlet in a sharp rising wail. The frenzy of passion in Temple is vividly evoked in her moment of reunion with her lover Red. Throughout the novel, Temple seeks physical exposure in a bid to fill the gap of
her spiritual insatiability. This is most effectively conveyed in the final scene, drawn against the backdrop of European opulence in the Luxembourg Gardens, in the image of the girl as she yawns listlessly and turns to her compact. And as she prepares a face to meet the faces, the intensity of response is insinuated in her eyes which seems 'to dissolve into the dying brasses' of the serenaders. The adumbration of responses in Temple is suggested in the colour and texture of greyness that hangs as a pall over the scene.

In *Sanctuary*, one gets the impression that the mythic overtones hinder rather than contribute to the artistic effect. Since the structure of the novel is controlled by the mythic legend, the thematic parallels divert the reader from the main concern. Besides Faulkner's exploration of responses in Temple appears too tentative. On one hand, the artist's preoccupation with her consciousness appears more pronounced and yet the kaleidoscopic views of Temple's experiences lack an inner unity. One finds that the mythic mode in the projection of the female is handled with greater perspicacity in *Absalom, Absalom*. Judith and Miss Rosa each through her own neuroses displays the innate dichotomy in the instinctive and the rational. Judith's adolescence
is viewed:

as though seen through glass ... in a pearly lambence without shadows and themselves partaking of it; in nebulous suspension held, strange and unpredictable even their shapes fluid and delicate and without substance; not in themselves floating and seeking but merely waiting, parasitic and potent and serene, drawing to themselves without effort the post-genitive upon and about which to shape, flow into back, breast, bosom, flank thigh. The beauty of this image lies in its controlled paradox "as though seen through glass" in terms of perspective; "parasitic and potent" being the condition, and "drawing to themselves without effort, the post-genitive upon and about which to shape" as the simulated activity. As Judith grows out of adolescence, even through the most harrowing experience of a lover's death, and a brother's flight, her image still appears transfixed, as though forever 'in nebulous suspension held'. The expression of wrapt bemusement is the face she puts on, and through all crisis, one confronts in Judith "the same face, calm, cold and tranquil". One glimpse of the underlying intensity in Judith is obtained in the scene when she is discovered in the stable, a silent participant in her father's repulsive wrestling bouts. While her mother calls to her in despair

47. W.F. Absalom, Absalom., p.67
and her brother retches and wails on witnessing the performance, Judith chooses to linger on. In *Absalom, Absalom* the mythic significance lies in the texture of experience rather than in the characters. The characters, despite the mythic associations, are at once viewed as rag dolls made up of bits and pieces of experience. The mode of aesthetic distancing is conveyed by explicit references to glass imagery. Miss Rosa believes that she holds the clue to their condition when she holds forth thus:

> There are somethings which happen to us which the intelligence and the senses refuse just as the stomach sometimes refuses what the palate has accepted but which digestion cannot compass — occurrences which stop us dead as though by some impalpable intervention, like a sheet of glass through which we watch all subsequent events transpire as though in a soundless vacuum, and fade, vanish: are gone, leaving us immobile, impotent, helpless; fixed until we die. ⁴⁸

This statement does not merely function as a perspective into the female response. The irony lies in Miss Rosa's exercise of "the intelligence and the senses" recognising the condition and her inability to reach for the means to remedy it. The submerged passion in Rosa at times sneaks into her verbalisations as when she coerces her memory to

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 151
reconstruct her childhood. Words, for Rosa, appear to be the outlet of her responses. The aggressive tone she assumes is in itself a paradox to her condition. She looks back on the first fourteen years of her life as:

... that unpaced corridor which I called childhood, which was not living but rather some projection of the lightless womb itself; I gestate and complete, not aged, just overdue because of some caesarean lack, some cold head - muzzling forceps of the savage time which should have torn me free, I waited not for light but for that doom which we call female victory which is: endure and then endure, without rhyme or reason or hope of reward - and then endure. 49

In her statement one finds evidence of the paradox in the exuberance of words and the enervation of activity. The image of gestation is used by Miss Rosa to convey the passage of time during those fourteen years, which she further qualifies by describing it as an 'unpaced corridor'. The quality of response is enunciated in the word 'endure' which represents the myopia inherent in the female condition. The passivity in the state of endurance which Miss Rosa reacts sharply against, implies that liberation from this condition lies in an act of prevalence. And ironic overtones suggest that Miss Rosa herself never finds release.

49. Ibid., p. 144
from that "unpaced corridor". She allows her imagination to wallow in sensualities, while her acts remain arrested by a convoluted reason. Yet another insight into the intensity of response in Miss Rosa is offered in the dramatic confrontation between her and Clytie, when she goes to offer her condolences to Judith. As Clytie reaches out to prevent her intrusion into the privacy of Judith's mourning, Miss Rosa reacts sharply to the touch of Clytie's palm. And almost at once she begins to rationalize her response:

Because there is something in the touch of flesh with flesh which abrogates cuts sharp and straight across the devious intricate channels of decorous ordering, which enemies as well as lovers know because it makes them both touch and touch of that which is the citadel of the central L-Am's private own: not spirit, soul, the liquorish and ungirdled mind is anyone's to take in any darkened hallway of this earthly tenement. But let flesh touch with flesh, and watch the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too.  

At the very moment that Miss Rosa repulses the "nigger" hand, she also realizes this to be the altar, "the citadel of the central L-Am's private own", where she longs to sacrifice herself. In Absalom, Absalom, the females appear to be drawn from the tradition of the Persephone myth. In this novel Faulkner strives to convey a level of dialectical tension which has not been encountered in the earlier novels.

50. Ibid., p.139
Indications of his maturing art are perceptible in his growing reliance on rhetoric rather than thematic illustrations. The potency of language in *Absalom* provides his females with a stature not discernible in his other works.

The most dynamic version of the mythic Persephone appears in the form of Charlotte in *The Wild Palms*. Her quest for "the citadel of the central I'Am's private own" begins with the mundane and ends in the tragic. The theme vaguely corroborates the mythic pattern in the acts of abduction, rape and release. At this stage one finds that Faulkner abandons the dramatic representation and concerns himself more with the linguistic mode. Charlotte by the very intensity of her responses appears to loom even larger than the desired effect for on several occasions she seems to outshadow her partner. At the beginning there are several references to the potency of her eyes "the unwinking yellow stare in which he seemed to blunder and fumble like a moth, a rabbit caught in the glare of a torch; an envelopment almost like a liquid, a chemical precipitant, in which all the dross of small lying, and sentimentality dissolved away". The likeness to a liquid underlines the fluidity of response in Charlotte. Though she is the embodiment of the female principle, the author underlines the sheer masculinity of her gestures to isolate her from
the female condition. In the first half of the novel, it is she who functions as the driving force. The first experience of their life together appeared to Harry as 'a fragile globe, a bubble which she kept balanced and intact above disaster like a trained seal does its ball'. Throughout the first half of the novel it is Charollette's grit and vitality that sees the couple through a series of crises. Her responses can never remain in stasis for she continually strives to remain worthy of love. She firmly believes that 'it's got to be all honeymoon always' and she fights free to stay within a realm removed from the corridor of time, not unfolding into 'successive days and nights but a single interval interrupted only by eating and sleeping'. Charlotte shuns pregnancy for she views it as an intrusion on the sanctity of their isolation. And when she discovers herself trapped in time, she urges for an immediate release. The creative impulse in Charlotte is juxtaposed with the mythic in the image of the woman in Old Man. The contrast lies in Charlotte's insatiable desire to find fulfillment in artistic activity and her total ineptitude in coping with the state of motherhood. She seeks her release in the life that her 'bitching hands' bring to the clay figurines. But the responsibility of pregnancy saps all the vigour from her being. In the second half of the novel after the act of abortion, analogous to
the mythic act of rape, her responses etiolate into:
that complete immobile abstraction from which even pain and terror are absent, in which a living creature seems to listen to and even watch some one of its own flagging organs, the heart say, the secret irreparable seeping of blood. 51
Charlotte's tragedy sets in before her death, in the affected immobility of her response. As she braces herself to confront the inevitable she puts on a face to meet the occasion. The "complete immobile abstraction" that the middle-aged Doctor on the Mississippi coast reads in her response is a mere front. The immobility springs from her reckoning with the tremendous constructive forces within. Doom, for Charlotte, does not lie in death for she faces that with exceptional courage. She realizes that the inevitable lies in her fierce abnegation of time. It is ironic that in her desperate bid to flee from time Charlotte exposes her own vulnerability. Though Charlotte and Harry's pursuit is recounted as one, the author subtly suggests that the distinction lies in the levels of responses. Her tragedy lies in her failure to acquiesce in time. Even till the last on her death bed she seeks to struggle free of time. Charlotte's triumph in death

51. W.F., The Wild Palms, p.3
is tragic for it speaks of her tenacity and her zest for life. In Charlotte the evocation of response remains mythic, for there is a sameness in her sustained flight from time. The implications of choice in Harry's decision to remain alive at the end suggest an accretion of consciousness. Harry's rejection of suicide or escape as alternatives to a life-term in prison are indications of his ultimate triumph in time. Repudiation of time in Charlotte is contrasted with the image of the woman in Old Man. The sketch of the woman, her innate fecundity and immutability of response is drawn from the tradition of the Diana women, such as Lena Grove and Eula Varner. The listlessness of the woman towards her own state of pregnancy, the hazards of the flood, the menace posed by a chaperone in the convict, and to his astoundingly benign ministrations, underlines the inner stasis. The image of the woman in Old Man functions solely to represent mythic fertility in the female and yet the artist's skill prevents her from being reduced to a literary abstraction. Without name, without features, without identity, she remains a symbol of the generative principle through the series of exposures. The author invokes the mythic in locating her delivery on 'that quarter acre mound, that earthen Ark out of Genesis'.
The image of the phantom buck, the sight of smoke rising upward, the motionless coils of snakes amidst the 'dim wet cypress choked life teeming constricted desolation' are artistic effects to liken the arrival of the newborn to a mythic regeneration. The study of Charlotte in *Wild Palms* and the woman in *Old Man* presents the fullest perspective into the contrasts of stasis and motion. The effacement of response and the woman's capacity to survive ironically suggest a sense of 'that doom which we call female victory which is : endure and then endure...'. Like Lena, she too is deliberately placed against the motion of time, in ironic inversion to the stasis within. Though the woman perspicuously fulfills the function of the female principle, her lack of response detracts from the heroic effect; whereas Charlotte despite her failure in fulfilling that function, by the very sincerity of her striving, appears to assume the tragic stance.

In terms of stylistic achievement, the image of the woman in *Old Man* is rendered with greater control than that of Belle in *Sanctuary* and Bula in *The Hamlet*. All three women stand as the embodiment of fertility in varying degrees of animation. The association of Little Belle and the fecundity of nature appear tentatively in the lurid imaginings of Horace in *Sanctuary*. The constant
reiterations of the summer twilight, the "grape arbor," "the delicate and urgent mammalian whisper" of her body, luscious in its "seething sympathy with the blossoming grape" serve as a response in refrain. In *Sanctuary*, the author's projection of the image of Little Belle appears too cursory to serve as a reflection on the female condition. In the presentation of Eula in *The Hamlet*, Faulkner displays greater artistic excellence. Though the nature associations are reminiscent of those used to describe Belle in *Sanctuary*, in this novel, they are more closely aligned with the mythic. Eula is drawn from the classics - "out of the old Dionysic times - honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof". The immobility of response is suggested in all her gestures, "it was rather as though, even in infancy, she already knew there was nowhere she wanted to go, nothing new or novel at the end of any progression, one place like another anywhere and everywhere". The sameness of her response springs from the lack of conflict within, "she might as well still have been a foetus". The school teacher's vain bid to immolate himself before this embodiment of "the supreme primal uterus" further enhances the mythic response in Eula. He views it as:

... the fine land rich and fecund and foul and eternal and impervious to him who claimed title to it,
oblivious, drawing to itself tenfold the quantity of living seed its owner's whole life could have secreted and compounded, producing a thousandfold the harvest he could ever hope to gather and save.\(^5\)

Labove's eulogies reflect his readings from the classics and the lyric tone suggests that he identifies Eula in his imaginings rather than in reality. The only occasion, when he does attempt to articulate his emotions towards her, ends in a fiasco.

The mythic strain is unmistakable in *The Hamlet*, as in *Sanctuary*; the distinction lies in the mode of implication. In *Sanctuary* the author labours to establish parallels between the Persephone legend and the plot, in order to justify his reference to a specific myth. *The Hamlet* appears to be more mythic in structure than in theme. The constant backdrop of the burgeoning spring, the fertilising moon, and the profligate earth, that runs through the various sections, serves as an appropriate stimuli for the evocation of a mythic response, perceptible in Eula, Ike Snopes and Flem. The serenity of their gestures far outclasses the elemental passions of the community. Eula's promiscuity and her marriage with Flem, the idiot's adulation of the cow and the mock elopement, Flem's depravity

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52. W.F., *The Hamlet*, p.119
and his sale of the spotted horses, all speak of conditions beyond the communal ken. The ironic overtones suggest that in this novel, Faulkner attempts to caricature the mythic response. The lyrical flourish, the abstruse allusions in the idiot's love idyll, and the mock debate between the Prince of Darkness and Flem indicate that much of the success lies in Faulkner's greater control over language. Brylowski makes a case for mythic analogies in The Hamlet by tracing thematic parallels with the Persephone myth. From the plot he infers that:

Although Flem is impotent like the Fisher King it seems more accurate to note Faulkner's juxtaposition of the marriage to Eula and the fantasy in which Flem takes over hell, a combination that points to Flem as Hades and to Eula as Persephone. The reverberations of the Persephone myth appear too subdued and too isolated to contribute to the structural unity of the entire novel. One finds that Brylowski's 'Flem-Satan-Hades and Eula-Persephone' correspondences fail to provide a rationale for the Ike Snopes - the beloved - cow episode. In The Hamlet Faulkner does not seem committed to the plot adherents of myth in the way he appears to be in Sanctuary. In terms of the evocation of response the analogies in fertility are closer to the myth of Diana. The image of fertility is fused into the landscape, and the characters

posed against it contribute to the hierarchy of response. Ike's idolizing of 'the flowing immemorial female' and their imaginary intercourse on the surface of the 'female earth', beneath the meridional sun and the turbid air of April, functions as a perfect simulation of the mythic conception. There is a motionlessness in Eula's gestures that raises doubts in any analogy with the Persephone female. Besides, the act of rape, if her marriage to Flem may be so termed, does not generate any self-revelation comparable to the mythic regeneration as in Joanna or Charlotte. The image of the cow lends stature to the figure of Eula, as the epitome of fertility in literary abstraction. The cow being the embodiment of the mythic Diana, serves a purer function in the evocation of responses, whereas Eula in the human form, is once-removed from the original. In The Hamlet the mythic referent which evolves the hierarchy of responses is posed in three forms of 'the flowing immemorial female', the landscape, Eula and the cow. Though the Diana myth provides the novel with a structural unity, much of the success rests on the ironic mode. If one were to probe below the surface irony, the book fails to project an inner unity of vision. The image of the woman in the Old Man story appears to be a greater artistic achievement.
Besides the image of the cow, the woman is Faulkner's most stylised version of the Biana female. In the portrayal of the woman, the artist no longer depends on a one-to-one correspondence with the mythic figure. There are no obtrusive mythic allusions attached with reference to her physical features. In her, myth is implied rather than stated. The only reference to her shape is to her state of pregnancy and her response remains throughout as one imponderable passivity. In the tradition of the Ilena female, she displays the utmost capacity for endurance as she stoically passes through a series of crises. She is deliberately drawn without name, without features, without identity, in order to accentuate her role as the female principle. Her image is dramatized through a contrast between the activity of child-birth and her inanimate response, and her feat of endurance with the lack of dialectical tension. In a reading of the stories in alignment, the woman in the context of the primeval flood appears to function as the inverted image of the mythic referent in Charlotte. Beside the indomitable urge for creativity in Charlotte, the woman appears as an etiolated version of the female principle. The generative drive in Charlotte emanates from an identical source, but instead of remaining content with fulfilling a biological function, it continually
strives to widen its reach. This is what Harry recognises in her when he says, "Why, she is alone. Not lonely, alone". From the beginning of their love-deal, Harry is conscious of the fact that "There's a part of her that does not love any body, anything" and with the increasing pace of their frenzied affair, he becomes increasingly aware of it. The tension built around the act of abortion suggests a level of crisis which extends beyond the physical threat to Charlotte's life. Charlotte wills Harry into performing the act of abortion for she longs for total abandonment to the creative principle. Harry resists for he realises the tremendous responsibility of his task and his own limitations not as a doctor, but as man. The act of abortion serves as the symbol for the act of rape. Charlotte's illness at the Mississippi coast is comparable with Persephone's stay in the dark underworld, while her death suggests the final release. The transitional element in Charlotte's story is in direct contrast to the evocation of time in the woman. There is a sameness in the passage through the flood which echoes the sameness of responses in the woman. The convict's musings during the course of the journey accentuate the fact, that the rapport, established between the two inmates of the skiff, springs only from their common experience. As the skiff
drives through the swirling waves the convict looks around him to find nothing:

... but trees and water and solitude: until after a while it no longer seemed to him that he was trying to put space and distance behind him or shorten space and distance ahead, but that both he and the wave were now hanging suspended simultaneous and unprogressing in pure time, upon a dreamy desolation in which he paddled on not from any hope even to reach anything at all but merely to keep intact what little of distance the length of the skiff provided between himself and the inert and inescapable mass of female meat before him. 54

The irony lies in the convict's recognition of his physical immobility in being caught in the flood "hanging suspended simultaneous and unprogressing" in pure time and his failure to identify his own response. The distance that he seems "to keep intact" between himself and the woman is not because of an abhorrence for her condition but a subconscious fear to acknowledge the inertia within. At every stage the convict evades a showdown in a confrontation with himself and turns away to the solace of the cyclic image of time evoked thus:

... and then dawn again (another of those dreamlike alterations day to dark then back to day again with that quality truncated, anachronic and unreal as the waxing and waning of lights in a theatre scene). 55

In The Wild Palms, the contrasts in the portrayals of Charlotte and the woman as compared to the contrasts in Ilena and Joanna indicate a development in Faulkner's art. In Light in August the artist strives so hard to preserve a semblance of reality that the mythic allusions with reference to Ilena and Joanna tend to be extraneous. Both the females are too obviously concretisations of a mythic fertility. The earlier novel appears to lack subtlety in the treatment of the female, especially in its reliance on symbols. The Wild Palms provides a deeper insight into the female condition. In the later novel, the author displays a greater control in the use of myth. The mythic allusions have been so well integrated into the portrayals of Charlotte and the woman that they function at once as real and mythic. The fluctuating states of stasis and motion in the female condition in The Wild Palms is rendered with a mastery unencountered in his earlier novels. One finds that reality in Charlotte and the woman is applicable only in a limited sense, whereas the mythic content in each

55. Ibid.
has greater potential. Charlotte and the woman are at no stage posed to represent contradictory qualities in womanhood, they are used to project variations in female responses. The mythic element is induced in the portrayals rather than imposed and this accounts for the infinite possibilities of response in Charlotte and the woman. The image of the woman in Old Man suggests an invocation to the mythic Diana whereas Charlotte's vitality is reminiscent of the legendary Persephone. The contrast no longer springs from the state of fertility or infertility as in Lena and Joanna. In The Wild Palms, it emanates from variations within the response. The sole feature that destroys the artistic effect of the novel is the sameness of experience. The corresponding states of pregnancy and the underlying thematic parallels in the woman's successful childbirth and Charlotte's foiled abortion appear unnecessary.

The Wild Palms is Faulkner's most dramatic representation of the mythic response. The image of the woman, being constantly placed within the context of the flood waters looms large as an embodiment of mythic fertility. The passivity of her gestures and her unchanging state of endurance is analogous to the myth of Diana. In Charlotte the creative impulse is generated by her conflict with the female condition. The myth of Persephone with application to Charlotte suggests a dynamic force that
evolves from a series of confrontations. In this novel the author excels in artistic representation, for the two myths are not contradictory but instead they appear to complement each other. *The Wild Palms* indicates Faulkner's growing concern with art rather than with reality in its evocations of landscape and the female forms.

The main purpose of this study of natural settings and the image of woman, in relation to the mythic response, is to provide a wider perspective for the man and nature configurations of the later novels. The chronological approach has been adopted to trace the development of the mythic response and establish its relevance to Faulkner's maturing art. The elaborate references to the actuality of the natural scene in *Soldier's Pay* and *Mosquitoes*, which appear decorative in a very literal sense, suggest that in the initial stages the artist strained to relate to reality. The images of the honeysuckle, the wistaria and the heaven-tree in the novels that follow are more cryptic statements of a mythic response. In the earlier novels the associations between the procreative urge in nature and the female are too tentative to be effective. *Light in August, Sanctuary, Absalom, Absalom* and *The Wild Palms* display the author's increasing involvement in the alignment of this innate impulse. In all these works,
the mythic response as evoked in the setting or the female form contributes to the structural unity through a more sustained reference. In *Light in August* and *Sanctuary* the mythic allusions rest predominantly on thematic parallels, whereas in *Absalom, Absalom* and *The Hamlet* the mythic referent is more closely related to the structure. The chronological perspective reveals that the intense man and woman interactions in *Absalom, Absalom* and *The Wild Palms* is sublimated into an artistic evocation of man and nature in the later novels.

This study traces the process of his maturing art from the self-conscious representations of nature in the earlier works through its struggle towards liberation into art forms. In the preliminary phase, Faulkner's evocations of the natural scene remain in isolation for the mythic associations appear as artistic embellishments. In the period that follows, the author delineates the mythic referent with greater clarity. Though myth appears to hold a central position in some of his works as in *Absalom, Absalom* and *The Hamlet*, on closer scrutiny, one discovers that it does not represent a mythic vision but that it is used to serve an artistic purpose. In each of these novels the reiterated references to the backdrop is used for controlling the pace of response in an individual, Ike Snopes.
or Bula or Flem in The Hamlet and Miss Rosa in Absalom. The Wild Palms is a far more ambitious attempt for between the two stories the landscape undergoes tremendous upheaval. Besides a vital distinction between The Wild Palms and the earlier novels, is that in The Wild Palms, the palms are used to evoke a movement in an individual consciousness. The use of nature in The Wild Palms is far more complex and a fuller discussion of it follows in a later chapter.

Myth plays a significant role in Faulkner's evocation of nature in the female form. The chronological perspective provides us with the author's insight into the female condition. In the earlier novels the mythic referent appears to be imposed merely for the purpose of aesthetic distancing, as in Cecily, Patricia and Caddy. The novels that follow show a greater involvement in artistic representation. The dramatizations of the legends of Diana and Persephone reveal the writer's concern with the fluctuating states of stasis and motion in women. This study attempts to delineate how the two myths are implicated in several novels, not to distinguish between good and bad women but to denote immutability and change in responses. The Diana women are those who resign themselves to the state of fertility. Though their role is sacred, Lena, Belle and Bula appear profane in their inertia and their failure to recognise their own condition. The portrayals
of the Persephone women are treated with greater empathy. The act of rape suggested in Sanctuary or The Wild Palms is not used to symbolise the deflowering of innocence in Temple or Charlotte. In both novels it functions as the profane means, sought by the women themselves, in order to precipitate a sacred end. The Persephone female is projected in motion for she is continuously caught in conflict with her condition.

And yet one finds that though some of Faulkner's women attempt to repudiate their state, and others passively endure, no woman is seen to prevail over her condition. The aura of respectability appears to envelope most women in stasis. Harry's comment in The Wild Palms is relevant to a certain extent to the Persephone female:

It's not the romance of illicit love which draws them, not the passionate idea of two damned and doomed and isolated forever against the world and God and the irrevocable which draws men; it is because the idea of illicit love is a challenge to them, because they have an irresistible desire to (and an unshakable belief that they can, as they all believe they can, successfully conduct a boarding-house) take the illicit love and make it respectable, take Lothario himself and trim the very incorrigible bachelor's ringlets which snared them into the seemly decorum of Monday's hash and suburban trains.56

56. Ibid., p.75
This statement has a special significance when studied in the context of Temple and Joanna Burden. Both these women fail in their quest for illicit love because they find they cannot accept it without the adornments of respectability. Temple makes a come-back to the spurious respectability of her family and her community at the end, in *Sanctuary*, while Joanna faces doom in her struggle to render her love respectable. Though Harry utters this remark with reference to his love-life with Charlotte, one finds that perhaps Charlotte is the only woman who is able to shed the garb of respectability. Harry makes this comment at the beginning of their affair, but later on when she insists on an abortion, he begins to know her well enough to realise that she seeks it for a greater purpose than for removing the stigma of guilt. Charlotte's death comes nearest to an act of prevalence when viewed in the range of Faulkner's women. She appears to immolate herself for the sake of keeping their love intact and to prove herself "good enough, worthy enough" for love.

The females who follow in the later novels in no way measure up to the stature of Charlotte. With her death comes the death of mythic female. Perhaps the only one who comes anywhere near Charlotte in her zest for life and in the repudiation of her condition is the doe-woman in *Delta Autumn*. The portrayal of the doe-woman or Miss Habersham indicates
that in the maturer works mythic evocations are integrated into the experience rather than remaining exclusive to settings or individuals. In The Wild Palms, Faulkner attempts to destroy the significance of myth with the use of counter-myths in contrapuntal effect. The maturer works show a greater involvement in man and landscape interactions. But the landscape in The Bear or Intruder in The Dust is no longer merely mythic representation. In the later novels myth is assigned a place for it emerges as an integral component in a hierarchy of responses. A possible reason for the effacement of the female form in its mythic fertility in the maturer works is offered by Gavin Stevens in Intruder in the Dust:

...the American woman has become cold and undersexed; she has projected her libido on to the automobile not only because its glitter and gadgets and mobility pander to her vanity and incapacity (because of the dress decreed upon her by the national retailers association) to walk but because it will not maul her and tousle her, get her all sweaty and disarranged. So in order to capture and master anything at all of her any more the American man has got to make that car his own. 57.

The idea of focussing attention on this passage is not for

57. W.F. Intruder in the Dust, pp. 230-231
claiming Gavin to be the author's spokesman. The purpose is to highlight the stasis of the female condition, underlined in the cause "it will not maul her and tousle her, get her all sweaty and disarranged". For the woman, the quest for respectability continues and the American man in his anxiety to "capture and master anything at all of her" not only acquires an automobile, but performs the ritual in seeking to "renew it each year in pristine virginity". The automobile as the "national sex symbol" not only draws attention to the society's pursuit of a false respectability but it also suggests a spurious sense of motion. The automobile replaces the female as the pride possession, because it is able to reduce time and distance to entities within the human reach.