

UNREALITY AS INHUMANITY:  
FAULKNER'S 'IKE' McCASLIN AND THE FAILURE OF HUMANISM

BY

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To My Parents

"For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you"

"Warum", sagte der Heilige, "ging ich doch in den Wald und in die Einode? War es nicht, weil ich die Menschen allzusehr liebte? Jetzt liebe ich Gott: die Menschen liebe ich nicht. Der Mensch ist mir eine zu unvollkommene Sache. Liebe zum Menschen wurde mich umbringen."

....

"Gehe nicht zu den Menschen, und bleibe im Walde! Gehe lieber noch zu den Tieren! Warum willst du nicht sein wie ich--ein Bar unter Baren..."

....

"Und was macht der Heilige im Walde?", fragte Zarathustra. (1)

W.F.: And do you think it's a good thing for a man to reject an inheritance?

Int.: Yes, in McCaslin's case, he wanted to reject an inheritance. You don't think it's a good thing for him to have done so?

W.F.: Well, I think a man ought to do more than just repudiate. He should have been more affirmative instead of shunning people. (2)

(1) Friedrich Nietzsche, Also Sprach Zarathustra Zarathustras Vorrede, pp. 278-279. Werke in Drie Banden Zweiter Band, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munchen.

(2) Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, edd., Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-58 (Charlottesville, Va., 1959, p. 246.

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## INTRODUCTION

## Faulkner and The Nobel Prize Speech

## A Frame of Reference

Faulkner's Nobel Prize speech is probably more important than that of any other prize winner, not only in relation to literature in general, but also in relation to the author's own career and work. It clearly combines a singularly profound statement on writing, on the author's dedication and aim, with a key to this author's own stand. This study will begin with an analysis of this Nobel Prize speech in an attempt to show the values that Faulkner develops in his fiction. Joseph Gold, in his book, William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism From Metaphor to Discourse, points out that the position of the critic who interprets Isaac McCaslin "as an object of Faulkner's criticism is a lonely and unusual" one.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that when the speech is related to Ike's life, this critical approach will be finally understood to be a sensible one.

It was in December, 1950, that Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the highest public honor attainable by an author. Upon receiving the award, he made a short speech of acceptance which was, and still is, a revealing comment by an author who was both highly praised and highly misunderstood.

Faulkner would not reject the opportunity to thank those responsible for his reception of this great honor. His comments reveal a sincere expression of his respect for the prize and all that it represents:

So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin.<sup>2</sup>

These are certainly the words of one conscious of the honor being bestowed upon him.

Even more important, there is a recognition of duty, the responsibility to honor the award given to him in trust. For Faulkner, the Nobel prize is not an end, but a great step forward, not only in his own career but, more important, in the career of his books. He wants them to be considered as more than fiction--as a comment on life to be examined, challenged and carried on. Hence, he states that he would like to use his "moment as a pinnacle from which (he) might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail".<sup>3</sup> The award is his "in trust" only. He does not want to deceive himself into believing that his is a totally secure position. Glory and recognition are symptoms of genius, but this does not mean that an author should allow himself to become stagnant. He must see this as a new beginning. With this prize comes a wider audience to which the novelist must attend. Conditions being what they are, Faulkner begins with his gratitude, establishes his sense of pride in accomplishment, but then moves on to a lengthier and more thorough expression of what he considers to be of great importance here. It is his credo concerning the author's role and his sense of responsibility, the meaning of acclaim, the function of literature in man's life, the difficulties of modern man's existence, the value of heritage and past glory, and, finally, the relevance of being. It is a profound and clearly expressed manifesto of

humanism. Actually, Faulkner does not separate his speech into a discussion of these several topics, but sees them, and justly so, as parts of a whole. The verities of old are not different from those now and to come. The way and meaning of achievement do not vary. Life does not essentially change: tragedy does not alter. The will to prevail does not die with one man or one nation or even one people.

Faulkner combines his sense of pride with his sense of humility. His books are achievements and are recognized as such. He is pleased with the outcome of "agony and sweat of the human spirit".<sup>4</sup> Hence he has much to be proud of. But he is far from being satisfied with what he has done. The Nobel prize is not, for Faulkner, a comment on his own virtues: "I feel that the award was not made to me as a man, but to my work".<sup>5</sup> It is the art which can communicate to the true essence of mankind which merits great praise. A writer is not in isolation, not his own creator, his own reader. The award belongs to the books which he has had the privilege to create because of his recognition of the order and fulfillment of human life. In a way, these books are part of him, but he sees them as more important apart from him. And, in a sense, his suffering carries with it a sense of failure which is an inextricable part of it as well as the success, since no author can make the final statement, conclude with the eventual, ultimate observation on mankind, make the final summary and evaluation of what life is all about. Life cannot be reduced to a simple syllogism, an atom of truth, but is a complex

pattern of molecules, a sorites leading up, down and out in an attempt to embrace a hopelessly full meaning.

It has been pointed out that many of Faulkner's readers were surprised to hear such words of optimism, such faith and belief in man, from the author of The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, As I Lay Dying and Sanctuary. These works were considered by most to be eventually, if not utterly, pessimistic. The general feeling was that Faulkner's attitude towards existence could be seen in Macbeth's soliloquy with his allusion to it, "full of sound and fury signifying nothing", in the title of his powerful novel. As usual, particular comments, attitudes taken by characters, are mistaken as those of the author. It is easy to overlook Dilsey.<sup>6</sup> Faulkner's treatment of social and physical degeneracy, of sin, guilt, despair, suicide, of misunderstanding, prejudice, of the doom of the one-time virtuous and royal southern families with their loss of tradition and sense of heritage, of the inability to cope with life, of selfishness and perversion, was for his readers an overwhelming, fantastically terrifying mass of gloomy data. Surely this realistic account, profound and diversified, revealed many obvious and deeply hidden vices all of which led one to naturally assess man's position as an ugly, limited, degraded, unredeemable one, lost forever to wisdom, virtue and salvation. Indeed, it is not surprising that one, in the midst of chaos, irony, fate, death, despair, absurdity, vice and meaninglessness, would overlook the Dilseys, the Lena Groves, the Byron Bunches and Aunt Jennies of his novels.



Sanctuary, the most popular of Faulkner's novels for many years, a "cause celebre", famed for its violence and Gothic "grotesquerie", is anything but optimistic. But the complete absence of redemption, and a hero or heroic stand, stoical as well as Christ-like, is rare in Faulkner's works. It is difficult to find a main character whom we could simply label evil. The humanist does not allow such stiff moral judgments. Although Faulkner plunges deeply and frequently comes up with much ugly and muddy debris which is hateful to man, one must look carefully at the complete attitude before making a final denial or assent. Pessimism is just too simple a verdict. What the author is indeed saying here and in his works, with all the force of his new realism, is that the true hero must be first a man among men, then an idealist. Life is no compromise, but a challenge, a commitment which has the will to endure as its primary virtue and the eventual prevailing of mankind as its outcome. This is sought by way of the battle within man to complete a quest, to foster a journey and finally live it, the eventual profession of a truth achieved through devotion, pride and humility. This is primarily what Faulkner is saying in his speech, not because he feels that the novels do not say it well enough for themselves, do not voice it powerfully and clearly enough, but because it bears repeating.

Faulkner admits that his books have been his "life's work in all the agony and sweat of the human spirit".<sup>7</sup> To live is not easy, if by life we mean more than vegetably existence, the capability of any created thing. Faulkner sees life as a

struggle to accomplish something, to gain knowledge, to live in virtue, to profess and make one's immortality and not merely be immortal according to some prefixed definition.

The difficulty of bearing life, of coping with it, is seen in the struggle to gain "endurance", a word which calls to mind a fight of some sort. To prevail means to overcome some odds, and hence, Faulkner, as author, has not really written for fun, but to draw out of himself, through agonizing moments, days and years, books which are not only his answers, not only his feelings, but objectified and integral books, self-subsistent, claiming the attention of all men. His comments, then, are for future artists, dedicated to humanity, "men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail".<sup>8</sup>

He speaks first of the tragedy of modern man. It is fear of distinction, diametrically opposed to the striving for endurance, which troubles him. Ironically enough, Faulkner sees the tragedy worsen in proportion to our ability to "bear it". When he says: "There are no longer problems of the spirit",<sup>9</sup> he does not mean that they have been solved. The reason that we no longer have these problems is because we have overlooked them in order to work on material problems. Bare existence, our fight for survival and physical comfort, has become our main concern to the detriment of human virtues, the search for truth, for love, beauty, and the final ability to prevail.

The artist is first man or woman and, consequently, he or she also "has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because

only that is worth writing about".<sup>10</sup> Faulkner here has committed himself to a definition of the worth of writing. For him, all that does not fit into credo is useless, superficial or superfluous. The soulless object has no meaning in itself, cannot long hold our interest, cannot contribute what Faulkner calls the source of "good writing", because it is dead, extraneous, heartless.

The author "must learn them (i.e. the problems of the human heart) again".<sup>11</sup> In Faulkner, they have not been solved and will not ever be, since each man will have to face them in order to grow into spiritual awareness. Faulkner states that courage is basic to man's struggle for self-discovery: "He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, in teaching himself that, forget it forever".<sup>12</sup> Fear is the enemy to the powerful virtues--endurance and courage and pride--but it is also an enemy to the sublime ones--humility, love and compassion. In fear one does not find the way to approach anything, but the way to turn one's back, in a refusal of life, a giving up into suicide, despair and cowardice.

Faulkner affirms that the knowledge of the nature of fear must lead men immediately to "forgetting it forever". One must turn to the heart with "the old virtues and truths..., the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed".<sup>13</sup> It is not the mind which is the source of truth, but the heart, which is the channel from which flows the great virtues, "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice".<sup>14</sup> Here, Faulkner turns to the old

words, but adds to their strength by reassessing their meaning in literature, which is simultaneously assessing their meaning in life. For literature is true to life and to the heart which is the seat of life. Writing from any other source is false, cheap and ugly, since man then "writes not of the heart but of the glands".<sup>15</sup>

Faulkner's strongest faith is in man's will to prevail and his "endurance". He sees this as man's ultimate purpose, which solves the paradox of human success and failure. Man may fail to achieve his ultimate ideals, but he is successful if he can carry out his struggle and prevail. He states: "It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound; that of his puny, inexhaustible voice, still talking".<sup>16</sup> But for Faulkner, the proof of endurance must carry us to something further: "I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail".<sup>17</sup> Endurance carries with it a sense of victory in a struggle by withstanding it. But "prevailing" is even more optimistic since it carries man to victory beyond the struggle, to a win, an overcoming. Man's endurance is not merely something which he can fall back on for support, since this will crumble without something more, "a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance".<sup>18</sup> Endurance is more than a puny voice in the midst of annihilation, a still echo in the midst of "nada", but must follow from challenge, from the strong blood in our hearts.

Faulkner explains the reason for his emphasis on the past as creative, the past which he so often brings to life, discusses, has his characters discuss:

The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of...the glory of his past.<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to say: "The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail".<sup>20</sup> The past and its achievement can be an inspiration to the man living now. In this sense, it does not act as a record by a part of the present active life, the life of progress towards truth. If the past is not a record, the present should be even less so. Faulkner states that the present writer has a great responsibility since his voice, i.e. his books, not himself, can be pillars to support man. The works of the writer laboring from the heart are not merely a complacent statement of man's immortality and inexhaustibility, but a statement of his soulfulness, his stubbornness, his virtues, his strength, his battle for victory. Man will learn to live statically by relying on his definition, thus falling into weakness, vice, fear, misunderstanding, a mere vegetable life, without any knowledge of the heart's problems because the man is heartless. Indeed man has a chance to make his own immortality, not merely to accept a static prop, but to work to prove his worthiness and the value of this immortality in making his life and its end not a whimper but a bang.

Faulkner's writing in this short speech is not prolix or pedantic, not complex or euphuistic. But he manages to capture

a dignity and profundity just the same. He keeps himself carefully restrained to a brevity and economy of words with a sort of Hemingwayesque devotion to simplicity. However, like Hemingway, Faulkner has much to say beneath the surface of these words. If we think over carefully what he has to say, commonplace words can take on a new, fresh meaning. His comments certainly can be an inspiration for the young writer today, especially when forcefully explored in terms of the novelist's works. Above all, they serve as a porch to the canon of twenty novels.

## CHAPTER I

IKE MC CASLIN AND THE THEME OF GO DOWN, MOSES

Faulkner's Go Down, Moses is clearly comprised of several stories, although one would not hesitate to state that there is a strong link between them, a centripetal force which frames them in a novel's structure. As a tightly knit work, the novel permits individuality, and even independence to these stories, whereas they ultimately function as part of a progressive whole. Go Down, Moses is hence difficult to sum up in a few words. Each story, like each man, can stand alone, at the same time existing as part of a totality, just as we are part of mankind. Ideally, these stories, like the individual man, must be considered in both contexts to be fully understood. Further difficulties in honestly adumbrating the central energy of the novel arise when we witness its stylistic variability. In some places, it is pure "light" narrative, whereas in others it can become just as intense, complex and impressionistic as the earlier Faulkner prose. The use of Biblical and mythical contexts vis-a-vis a social point of view, the American dream and tradition, the stories of loneliness, the whole negro-white situation, the problem of landownership, heritage, responsibility and self-knowledge all tend to render the novel elusive to any precise assessment.

But the title is Go Down, Moses from the negro spiritual

which concludes: "Let my people go". The novel is intended to be a unified statement on the complex theme of freedom and bondage. Naturally, this theme develops in a multidimensional way on several strata. On one level, we have the "social" problem of negro slavery. But this is merely a convenient, isolated summation of a problem, a concentric comment which gathers about itself the moral, political, spiritual and economic issues. Since these are all part of the human situation, they concern Faulkner. But more precisely, this is Isaac McCaslin's story--Ike the boy, and gradually, Ike the man, who, bound to his youth, his heritage, his past, his human limitations and ambitions, strives to seek a new freedom. Certainly, we read stories where Ike is not even present, stories placed even in time previous to his birth. But these are the environment, the soil and roots, from which Ike must blossom forth. Will he be grotesque, dark and worm-centered, or will he be healthy, light and beautiful?

Hence, it is Ike as an individual, and as a representative, an image, possibly even a symbol, who dominates this book. I say this because in the Faulkner world, which he hopes to demonstrate is our own world, each of us is a product of our society, our family, our land, our God. It is our relationship or absence of relationship with the world and man which matters. Certainly, if being human, living at a certain age in a certain place of a certain parentage is predetermination, an undecided fate, then we are, to this extent, designed beings. But within us, in our hearts, is a synthesis of many things. Ironical though it may seem, our determined life thrusts us unknowledgeable



creatures, "tabulae rasae", bearing our liabilities and our capabilities, our only potential egos, into a life where we are condemned to freedom, to choice, to an exercise in volition, in self-creation, which lasts a lifetime. Hence, freedom and bondage are inextricable. Ike, son, American, idealist, individual, boy, man and "uncle", member of mankind, is not spiritually absent from the novel for one second. Everything does or does not make sense through him.

Paradoxically enough, when we return, after completing the novel, we find that there are many gaps concerning Ike's life yet unfilled. We see that we know very little about the wide period between his youth and maturity. We only see him as a young lad, when idealism is his freedom, and as an old man, when idealism is his chains. We fail to get more than a glimpse, however, of his in-between years except mistily, in the backdrops, although it is clear that much has happened to Ike that is far from good and that the lack of equanimity, the prejudice, guilt, excuses and wrongdoings still pervade the Southern atmosphere with a smell worse than rotted flowers that once perfumed the air.

Ike is the chief product of the plantation in Go Down, Moses. He, like the other members of mankind, does not live for the world, but it lives for him. One cannot help but be ambivalent, cannot help but hope always, yet despair momentarily, cannot fail to be caught up in the turgid romance, mystery, myth, dream, aspirations, productivity, joy and even humor here, which make the life so full, the people so human, the land so opulent, blessed by nature's hand and by a past

which cannot be obviated. It is a peoples' world, where without living eyes, ears, mind and heart, the order, so high-pitched, quickly breaks up into chaos. Opposite grotesque nightmares are romantic dreams, and the Gothic world, full of extremes, promises a life of contrast, emotion and exotic "bizarrerie". Neo-realism, humanism contribute to the full-blooded quality of the people, present their lives as harmonic or dissonant in proportion to their affinity with the world.

Only recently have critics begun to see that Isaac's story deserves an "unromantic reading". I find it difficult to side with this attitude completely, since a reader of Faulkner cannot possibly repudiate the romantic any more than he can repudiate the south which I have just portrayed. It is certainly an exotic, rich, sentimental and mysterious vision, and Faulkner, in moving away from it in Go Down, Moses to the extent that he does, shows great abilities as a judge of himself. Nevertheless, we are not only presented with an allegory, but are shown a beautiful southern forest. Bears are giants, men's lives, especially those of past ancestors, full of adventure. The negro is ever-present. But above all, love is still a basic concern. Other novels do contain the unromantic, the ironic, but few of them are based as strongly on its viewpoint as is this one. Nevertheless, if Faulkner creates a subtle but unmistakable irony, he does not forget compassion. If he works towards a starker prose, to create a calmer and less febrile world, a less labyrinthine nature, we are grateful that the movement is not complete. If Ike is ultimately in the wrong, it is a terrible tragedy, but not

so much perverse or grotesque as it is soul-shatteringly human. Crowded, ornate settings have given way to a calm, silent and simple one. The real destruction is subtle and profound. But the death of the forest hints of its advent. Certainly, it is another great achievement for the author to be able to portray such failure--not stagnant now, not over-ripe, but sterile and lifeless. The romantic treatment of Quentin and Rosa Coldfields' southern temperaments and lives is replaced here by a less melodramatic, less complex, less peculiar tragedy. The foundation for this tragedy is man's failure to be human, his victimization by unreality, the great parasite which feeds on his life and leaves him withered and inhuman.

It is my hope that it will become evident in this paper that to take, without subtlety or compassion, the simple stand of black or white, romantic or unromantic, is to miss much of what Faulkner attempted to reveal about life. If Faulkner has erred elsewhere, I am prepared to accept this. But Ike, I would affirm, is a successful creation.

## CHAPTER II

## THE BEAR: DREAM TO REALITY

"The Bear" is the very heart of the novel--the heart of Isaac McCaslin's story and the central development of the human freedom and bondage theme. We watch this character's gradual growth from childhood to maturity, beginning with his tenth birthday, the year of his first hunting trip and ending with his twenty-first birthday, when he repudiates his heritage and ownership in the commissary before his cousin, Cass. This is the basic movement, although Faulkner, for express artistic purposes, does not confine himself to this chronological progression. Like Chick Mallison in Intruder in the Dust, Ike is the "he", the main character, in the story. Our attention is concentrated on his growth from untaught and innocent childhood towards an awareness, responsibility and sense of spiritual conflict which finally leads to a resolution of this conflict. The central difficulty follows from here with the evaluation of this life's resolution. Faulkner shows the dilemma of Ike's choice, either to foster his virtues or to allow them to overcome him. Does Ike control his pride or does it control him? The question is whether his virtues and aspirations finally do outweigh his human characteristics, leading him rather toward a betrayal than an achievement. With Ike's decision to repudiate his claim, his moral maturity is complete, since his dreams, hopes and

fantasies have finally grown into a sensitive and virtuous man's idealism for which he is willing to make great sacrifices. One must not deny Ike's great potential, his great amount of virtue, knowledge and understanding. What we must look at is this first irrevocable choice and the motives behind it. Does what should follow from Ike's bud actually appear and blossom? Whether redemption or failure succeeds as the eventual issue is of primary importance here. This development, crisis and eventual decision in Ike's soul is the theme of "The Bear".

However, Faulkner does not present the story in this simple time sequence. Parts one to three deal with Ike's first six years as a hunter, from his tenth to sixteenth year, culminating with the three deaths--Old Ben's, Lion's and Sam's. Part four does not move on from here, but, curiously enough, plunges into Isaac's twenty-first year, with his refusal to accept the family's land, heritage and way of life. In part five, we move backward once more to Ike's eighteenth year, the year of his last visit to the forest before its destruction by the Memphis lumber men. Here we have Faulkner's obvious attempt at rejecting a time sequence. Like Conrad, he moves events and characters' thoughts about so that the reader is carried ahead, back, and then ahead once more. What the author is implying is that time does not have any relevance in pure experience. Past, present and future are only man-made labels, only convenient ways of serializing, of simplifying life into sequences, cause and effect, order, proportionate movements. But experience is not this simple, not a cause and effect relationship moving towards the next event from the one most

recent to it. Past, present and future are all of one time-- never to die, never to pass completely, never to come. We can never say that this is tomorrow, although yesterday it was. The heart has no gauge by which to order time. It is a composite of all life's experiences without partiality to temporality. Hence, even facts are limited, not the whole truth. Man's conflict is based on an awareness, however unconscious, of all three kinds of time. What will he do now? In order to answer, he must look back and ahead. What is truth? Since it is only to be realized through life, Ike must live fully in the knowledge of what has happened to man since the Fall through Cana, Rome, the discovery of America, the Civil War, his family's history, origin and development. These are all part of the nature of life. As we see in part four, they are also factors in determining his repudiation. There is not, says Faulkner, any such thing as a simple progression from this to that. Time is circular because life is, existent not only linearly, but also as one organic whole. The factors which determine growth and awareness are complex. The final say is up to man who must use his own will to determine how he will endure, if he chooses to endure at all. Fate may have something to do with the man being alive and the general outline of his attitude, but the actual acceptance of the stand is up to man.

The first three parts of the story present us with the beginning of Ike's career and end with his sixteenth year, a fully trained hunter and woodsman, an understanding devotee of the forest-life, at the threshold of spiritual maturity.

It is here that he makes his first decision, the decision which has a most powerful influence on his future decisions in parts four and five.

In the opening lines of part one, we find a curious mixture of past and present associations:

There was a man and a dog too this time. Two beasts, counting Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran, which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible. He was sixteen. For six years now, he had been a man's hunter.<sup>21</sup>

Here we see Faulkner's treatment of time at work, the past and present juxtaposed but presenting no difficulty in the simple narrative style. Obviously, we are to keep two things in mind. We are being taken back according to our conventional value of time, but our heart and imagination will quickly betray our superimposed, artificial judgment as the past becomes present.

The first part of the story deals with the transformation of Ike's misty dream into a clearly promising reality: "He had heard the best of all talking".<sup>22</sup> Ike has made his dream of the hunt an important part of his life. His promise shows in the hopefully prophetic and sensitive dreams of achievement and virtuous self-understanding. Even years before he is allowed to go on the trip, he takes great interest in Old Ben and the stories, emotions and way of life associated with the bear. Words like "myth" and "reality", like fantasy and fact, try to separate our imaginative delusions from apodeictic fact. But somewhere they do overlap. Ike knows that the bear may

not be as large as it appears to him, just as he knows that the myth may not be true. Yet he lives, not in magical illusory worlds but in idealistic, hopeful temples. Naturally, the attitude towards the size of the woods--

the big woods, bigger and older than any  
recorded document--<sup>23</sup>

and the bear--

shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent  
but just big--<sup>24</sup>

is accurately that of a dreaming child. But dreams do have their truth, and to the heart, they can become real, as long as the heart is pure and does not betray the mind or soul in maintaining the human balance: "It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it".<sup>25</sup> But there are maturer points of view compounded with the fantasies to complete the experience now.

Ike, in retrospect, recalls the discussions of man's fatuity in trying to own the land and of the attitude that the superior hunter was the superior man, not the member of some specific race. Certainly these are not abstract statements, but conclusions that Ike has drawn from the attitudes of the hunters. It is doubtful that the man would have stated these things outwardly, but one would assume them from the behavior of the men. "It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet".<sup>26</sup> These are the eventual conclusions of a man experienced and understanding looking back on his early anticipations and divinations, now fulfilled. Ike recalls the feelings he had about the others going on a hunting expeditions: "To him, they were going not to hunt bear and deer but to keep yearly rendezvous with the bear they did not even intend to kill".<sup>27</sup>



Already the sensitive child begins to feel akin to the attitude which he will know, accept and live by until the bear is dead, when he will then stand the lone disciple of the life which the bear epitomized. Ike's life will be the remaining attempt to keep Old Ben's world immortal by preserving its spirit.

Finally, Ike's turn comes to participate "in the yearly pageant--rite of the old bear's furious immortality".<sup>28</sup> Ike is the humble novice who must learn patience, pride and understanding through his experiences in the woods. His are the humble duties of a new member, who must work to familiarize himself with the forest, his temple, in order to learn to respect and to cultivate in himself the proper attitude towards the life he is entering. Ike wonders why he does not even see Old Ben's tracks, although Sam Fathers, his spiritual father, who helps him grow in the way of life, claims that the bear will come to see the boy on his lowly stand. At one point the bear does come. Sam states: "'He done the looking'",<sup>29</sup> and Ike and the little dog share in the fear which has pierced the near-by woods. When Ike wonders why he has not seen the bear, Sam states, "'You aint looked right yet'".<sup>30</sup> Paradoxical implications, the bear's hugeness and yet his misty furtiveness, his destructive powers and his constructive inspiration to hunters, his immortality and his death, begin to gather at this point. Ike has no problem in accepting these paradoxes, but he must evaluate them. He must find out what they mean to him. It would be foolish to see the bear as another Christ avatar, yet it is God-like. It is fierce, inspiring, ageless, an incarnation of a lonely, heroic and virtuous life. Certainly

it is closer to Melville's whale, the ambiguous destructive-constructive complex seen as the fearful and beautiful whiteness. These creations span large symbolic areas and yet their mystery and concreteness allow them to do so. They are encompassing creatures, which, in their enigmatic totality, contain all the antithetical values of life. They reflect, in magnificent, individual proportions, the inner and outer realities of us, as lonely and yet one with a life. They are a projection of our own psyche, and we consequently fear, respect, know and deny them. Where some of us may see only evil, the saved will see the justice, beauty and power of their truth. Since it is time for Ike to choose, he decides to leave the gun. This is the last time that he will need to be advised so openly. Even though he leaves the gun, however, the bear does not approach. He recognizes, himself, that "the leaving of the gun was not enough".<sup>31</sup> Now the watch and compass are abandoned, civilization's two false measurements of time and space. The forest has its own laws and Ike begins to understand this. Certainly the emphasis on vision, quest, search, indicates a need for a clearer inward vision. Eventually, he sees the bear because he has come to Old Ben on his terms. Now he is the true hunter because he has accepted time and space as the forest knows them, not as measurements, but as integral parts of an experience, which the dimensionless soul sees. Forms, substances, relative locations according to sun's location, geographical site, are all subjugated by the meaning behind the experience.

The gap between dream and reality is filled when Ike sees

the bear. It is not "as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity".<sup>32</sup> Ike realizes the limitations of a child's dream. One must always wake up. Dreams do not totally impinge on reality, but are replaced by expectation, by the heart's hope, when the moment of reality arrives. Ike is now the maturer because he recognizes the difference and copes with it. There is no question of disappointment or disillusion. Dreams can never be betrayed, because they are the betrayers. But whatever is false in them is superficial, and, at their core, we find the gathering of seeds for sunlight hopes. Pride and humility, the knowledge of one's possibilities, the realistic acceptance of one's limitations, allow the individual to pass from dreams to reality. The bear is no longer part of an unrealistic fantasy, but part of a larger and more positive dream which is to become Ike's mature idealism.

In part two, we see Ike's sensibility and understanding widen along with his maturity. The first statement made here is "So he should have hated and feared Lion".<sup>33</sup> We might expect one to hate an external force which would destroy a dream come true. But it is more than a dream involved now. Hence, this section ends with the statement:

Yet he did not. It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something...He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too.<sup>34</sup>

Here, Faulkner has enclosed within a tightly structured section the whole question of what happens when one's dream begins to come true, and, at the same time, is challenged by a destructive force. The weak, impatient, childish would be angered, but Ike has grown in pride and humility. He does not resent Lion. It is paradoxical that the acceptance of Ike into this way of life is a beginning, while the forest life itself is beginning to die. But his understanding allows him to accept this without anger or despair. One might see ironic equivocations in the triple use of "too". Does it mean "also", or does it refer to excess of virtue, a groundless sanctimonious awe? The "ironic reader" might already see heavy overtones at this point. Ike sees the fatality, but does he see his own?

Between the statements of fact that Ike should be angry and hateful and that he is not, we see what kind of force Lion represents and the reason for Ike's mature attitude. At the end of part one, Ike is gaining in wisdom, but now he has experience to back it. Awe does not vanish but becomes respect, innocence joins with wisdom, hope with understanding, because the heart allows it. The boy is now a full-fledged hunter who has gone through a blood ritual, killed a bear, and is now "as competent in the woods as many grown men with the same experience".<sup>35</sup> He now knows the area well, and with this understanding comes also an understanding of what the area represents. Ike can find life at its most natural level, a primitive life outside of civilization's artificialities much like the prelapsarian Eden. Ike has his chance to shoot

the bear, but instead chooses to throw away his gun and run after the brave fyce, too brave for its own good. Both Ike and Sam reject this chance to kill the bear. The rescue of the dog is partially a pretext to overlook the opportunity. Ike and Sam both know that they cannot kill Old Ben. But some day the dog will be brave enough to stalk him for a less awed hunter. And Sam and Ike can only conclude that the bear will then be in the hands of conscienceless violence.

When Sam captures Lion, he realizes that this is the animal they have long been looking for. Instead of rejecting or slaughtering it, however, he trains it for the kill. Once more the ambivalence comes through. Why try to kill the immortal, why try to injure a friend? The issue is complex. The substance of the bear is the form of the wilderness life which Sam recognizes must now be freed. Otherwise it will be smothered in small quarters, maligned, mocked, possibly even slain. Sam, also old, realizes that he and the bear are anachronisms who would be happy in death, which they eventually "embrace". It is a question of freedom and bondage of the most subtle and spiritual essence. The old form of the spirit found in the wilderness, hunter and bear, must die so that the ritual can recapitulate with a new birth in a new form. The second avatar will preserve the spirit of the older life in a thriving way. Courage, pride and humility will not pass with their shell but will find a new dominion. Like Sam, the bear is a "full-blooded" prince, in the true sense of the word, not that they are pure breeds, but that they are as near to the primitive way as possible, and, more

important, have the necessary courage and pride. Ike sees in Sam's face a joy in discovering Lion:

And he was glad....He was old....He had no children, no people, none of his blood anywhere above earth that he would ever meet again. And even if he were to, he could not have touched it, spoken to it, because for seventy years now he had had to be a negro.<sup>36</sup>

Here we find the same attitude applied to Sam as was applied to the bear. Sam feels that he is also an anachronism. His time will come to depart when the bear is dead. Then there will be no more reason for him to live. Sam is alone. He has had to stoop before white man's ways. He also recognizes the glory of the past, however. Old Ben represents the old way of life, the life in the woods where one struggles not only for survival but for continual re-emphasis of one's virtues and commitment to the code established there. Sam has been subjected to compromise and disdain whereas the bear has not. Old Ben still reigns supreme, is still the "Priam" of his forest. In a religious sense, he is truth and the conscience of the way of life which he epitomizes. Ike and Sam, of his order, must continue to challenge him, but they cannot kill him. They both struggle against him and respect him. He represents the foe and the friend, and is not the prize in himself. It is the "achievement" of him, their confrontation, which rewards man with understanding. This way of life is gradually running itself dry. Sam and Ben are the only remaining members, while Ike remains their hope as the new priest. Sam and the bear must, together, in death, in a bloody sacrifice, define a new testament for Ike to spread.

Boon has been corrupted, is not a completely and deeply

dedicated priest, while Lion is also tamed enough so as to turn on the wilderness and its bear instead of killing some colt from the "other" world. It is Ike's dilemma, and the Judas-like betrayal and Christ-like crucifixion must not be wasted but must be invested with power and motion in this new disciple. Caught between two worlds, born a son and heir to one, seeking to be a spiritual heir to the other, which is a doomed anachronism, Ike must find his way through the maze. Eventually he must choose one way or the other, or, more hopefully, make them synthesize as one.

Thus, Sam's feelings are also bound to be in conflict because he does not want to die and see Ike lost to fortuity, nor does he want the spirit of his life to fade inexorably. At the same time he is getting old and tired. He has taken too much from the white man, has been "pinned and wriggling on the wall"<sup>37</sup> so that "for seventy years now he had had to be a negro".<sup>38</sup> This conflicts with his sense of pride, although he does know a greater justice in the forest. But Sam has also been humble and has submitted without bitterness to one world's vapid disdain, finding pride in the other. Now his world is being threatened and is too weak to withstand the blows. Will those inside sacrifice their lives so that the inner treasures might be saved, so that the tabernacle may be saved? Or will it all have to perish together? Naturally, Sam looks forward to achieving the first of these two alternatives. What he will not be able to stand is to see his way of life, typified in Old Ben, ungraciously and punily gnawed away by civilization's parasites. He will not let

himself die and leave Old Ben to be denuded of his surroundings and to die ungloriously at the mercy of trivial old age or some uncouth, ignorant, foolish intruder's gun--needless to say a sacrilege. Sam has decided that, since death is inevitable, it will be on his own terms, so that it will not be eternal.

Boon Hogganbeck, a half-breed who is a poor hunter and who loves his liquor too much, idolizes Lion. He is the perfect representative of the foolish, petulant, selfish child who is unable to see beyond himself. He even becomes a matron to the dog, allowing it to sleep with him. Clearly, his values are imbalanced and precarious. Sam, however, will not be condescending to Lion. He remains the tamer, Lion the tamed. In this way, Sam does not let his pride give way before the courageous dog. He cannot stoop to it, because, at one and the same time, it is destructive of his whole way of life and the tool of his salvation. Sam must remain supreme in order to be free to control and master his own fate, whereas Boon will give too much respect to it. This is a question of freedom and bondage again, one man retaining his self-respect, the other foolishly repudiating it to act as a slave to a beast. It is fitting that part two should end with Lion drawing blood from the bear and Boon's rejection of Lion as a bad companion. Or rather it is Lion's rejection of Boon:

'I ain't fit to sleep with him'.<sup>39</sup>

It is this excessive idolatry which will lead to the man's weakness and error in part three.

Part three deals with Ike's sixteenth year, the important



year in which Old Ben, Sam Fathers and Lion are killed, and, also, the year of Ike's decision. Will the paths bifurcate, run parallel or commingle? The challenge is whether the life he has led will find new air, languish in atrophy or die. These are the questions which will flow and will begin to organize with this first decision.

It is ironic that Ash should admonish Boon with:

'I ain't never heard tell of you bringing no bear nor no other kind of meat into this camp'.<sup>40</sup>

This is merely two days before Boon will kill the great bear of the woods. Ike goes with Boon to Memphis for some liquor. Faulkner presents us with the hero who will slay Old Ben and it is ironic that he is not a courageous, intelligent hunter, but the poorest shot in the camp, a big, lumbering child:

four inches<sup>41</sup> over six feet; he had the mind of a child

Boon, the grotesque, appears clumsy in society, where liquor, his own slovenliness and his ignorance demand his downfall. Boon has no place, but is a useless wastrel in both worlds. He is faithful, but even fidelity and bravery can be harmful if a person is "improvident and unreliable".<sup>42</sup> The inter-changing of values, where Boon becomes faithful to Lion and acts as his servant instead of the dog proving to be man's best friend, shows that he is not a very worthy character. In the so-called civilized world, Boon, professionless, poor, incorrigible, is awkward and repulsive. He seeks to foster his vice--liquor, even if he must buy it with money from a boy's savings. In the hunter's world he is a shameless, only somewhat comic figure, who cannot hit an animal of any size and who cannot teach an animal subservience, but becomes a

servant himself. The comedy and irrationality associated with this character eventually lead him to a tragic and destructive role. It is Boon, who, in an attempt to save Old Ben's foe, Lion, from the bear's death embrace, stabs it with his knife. Boon has already demonstrated his strong feelings for the dog. Now he proves how desultory these sentiments are. Boon's emotions out-strip his reason. He eventually has been brought to the point where he slaughters Old Ben.

Here, in the death scene, Old Ben takes on a human appearance:

It caught the dog in both arms, almost lover-like, and they both went down.<sup>43</sup>

It is as if, at this point, he proves that man's awe is well-founded. He transcends his own nature and like his companion, Sam, embraces death to his heart, allowing it to destroy him. The fall of Old Ben is more than the fall of an old bear. Boon sees this also. When the bear dies, he takes on no sense of pride. He does not think of his own wounds, or of Sam's, but of Lion. Obviously, Boon has gone beyond rationality. With the death of Old Ben, Sam also slumps off his horse. Gradually we learn that he has just given up living, although earlier hints have led us to suspecting this. Lion and Old Ben must both die, because they are of Old Ben's world, the world of the heroic in the forests of nature. Now they have no reason to live, no purpose, as the society outside moves in with impunity. Lion dies from deeper wounds inflicted on him by Old Ben. Sam dies from deeper wounds inflicted on him by civilization, once a suppression of his

personal pride, but now a gathering force ready to invade his world. Now that the bear is dead and the forest is no better than destroyed because of its inescapable fate, Sam finds that his way of life, the world he knew, is obviated and, without the impulse to preserve or guard anything he might have, the impetus for living has also turned to sawdust. There is some hint that Boon has killed Sam because Sam had asked him to do so. Others question him:

'Did you kill him, Boon?' 'No!', Boon said, 'No!'<sup>44</sup>

When McCaslin continues the interrogation, Ike cries,

'Leave him alone!'<sup>45</sup>

Boon realizes that, by killing the bear, he has been the one who has answered Sam's plea for a mercy-killing. Ike, in anguish and understanding, recognizes this also and hysterically requests that they allow Boon some secrecy.

Ike's choice to stay is expressed as a commitment, a decision without alternative (i.e. 'I've got to stay'), and his defense of Boon's secrecy shows him fully committed to the way of life which Sam has fathered in him. He will not desert Sam, betray Boon, or allow anyone to torment him. Clearly, Ike has made a choice without much difficulty, because his idealism is strong and his heart pure. He will not repudiate this life, this bear, this father. The sense of code and pride are held up by Ike. He will stay with this way of life even though its great living symbol, Old Ben, and its high priest, Sam, have died. Lion, the third member of the full-blooded trio, has also fallen. But in Ike survives the memory, the lessons, the understanding, the courage, the

rejection of the false aspect of the civilized world to remain with Sam in misery and death. Ike's acceptance of life, his orientation to the wilderness, has only been half of his trial. His heart and soul have been matured for a greater battle. Now he has to accept the death and evil in it, since pride is easy to achieve, but humility is not so easy to encourage. For the moment, Ike copes with it well, although he is obviously suffering his first doubts and feels a new sense of loneliness.

Now Faulkner must lead Ike's education to its last step. If dreams were not enough for a boy, it is doubtful that dreams of the past will be any more promising for the man. They also crumble and change before the form of the invading world. Then the question is whether the spirit in Ike is strong enough to survive without betraying Old Ben, Sam and himself, with all that he has learned. Sam's and Lion's deaths might erase his Eden, if it is shabbily constructed, clinging to a superficial view of the past as perfection. In other words, the question is whether Ike can cope with the evil, a necessary organic part of the life he has chosen to lead. Ike must either commit himself to his idealism which he has learned, or reject it. He must take what is eternal in the life he has known and reject what is paralysed and dead. Possibly he can evaluate the fading way of life in terms of the present one, if he will not allow the gap between the two worlds to widen. Ike must join present and past, must fuse in creativity the now and the ever. His sixteenth year brings this conflict to a head. With no priest, the young acolyte and devotee of this

way of life will have to find out if there is anything to which he might adhere. Otherwise, sacrifice is for naught.

## CHAPTER III

## "THE BEAR": REALITY TO DREAM

Parts four and five carry on from the conclusion of Ike's education. Part four deals with Ike's twenty-first birthday, the day which means the advent of manhood, and, hence, the point where he must either pick up the family's possessions and heritage as an American land-owner of the McCaslin family, or else reject the whole thing. The scene for this action is the commissary, where Cass and Ike do all the talking.

Faulkner has altered his style and approach drastically in this section. Instead of the clear, at least partially objective view of the past, from a distant stand, where one now realizes the implications, we are thrown into a complex, conflicting, blurry and obscure view of the present. The author allows his style to become broken up, fragmented at times, at times long-winded, prolix and interwoven with many ideas. Cass and Ike are, however, concerned with proving to one another, and more important, to themselves, that their ways of life are the best. Because they are groping for the words to evaluate and justify their existence, to overcome conflicts and to come to terms with their decisions, their trains of thought must be sinuous and must delve deeply into the meanings of the various facets of life. Obviously, these thoughts will not appear in a simple, direct way.

It is fitting that they should meet at the commissary,

the real centre of the conflict. For Cass, it shows the way of life which he and Ike must follow. This commissary is the symbol of heritage, achievement and the only civilization he knows. Cass must place all his trust in this world and, if it does wrong, one can only depend upon it to over-balance its drawbacks with the social and economic advancement it offers. Cass cannot see why Ike turns his back on all that his and Ike's ancestors have fought for so desperately and courageously. Meanwhile, Ike does not see how anyone can accept it, since, for him, it means repudiating all that he has learned in the forest--the virtues of pride, humility and courage as well as the codes of fairness, freedom, equal chance and communal anonymity. There are, of course, truths in both arguments. If Ike cannot find these virtues in the other world, it is up to him, to seek to plant them there. Instead, because Cass's world lacks them, he refuses to allow it any purpose in his life, to see any good in its doings and strivings. The fact that Ike takes the passive, defensive stand shows that he is weak. He must prove that his way is right. It is definite, at this point, that the obsession with rightness and moral absolutism is here along with a complete intolerance of other points of view and of man's futile and limited scope. It is wrong to allow only pity or disdain for the other point of view. Ike does not realize that man deserves and demands more than this from his fellow beings. For Cass, it is enough to live life. He does not hope to prove himself always in the right but challenges Ike's point of view. With more hope, more idealism from Ike, Cass, who is honest but

who should have more penetrating visions, could do great things. Cass is justified in assessing Ike's action as an escape. Ike, himself agrees with this but he sees that it is an escape, not from responsibility, but from an existence which he could never lead and, at the same time, be true to himself. There is certainly sufficient moral inflexibility and cold-heartedness in this attitude. The escape is not that simple, but Ike must always be right.

To Cass, the ledgers are a statement of, not only the past of this family, but also the past of the whole South, and even the past of the entire earth. Ike obviously agrees. But their opinions of man's commitment to this past are not always in agreement. Cass recognizes all the sins and failures committed in the past, but he knows that he cannot free himself from it. He sees, in Ike's decision, a betrayal of the family and the past which men cannot escape. But Ike sees, in the retaining of the family heritage, a much deeper betrayal--the betrayal of the self. Ike feels that he must do what is right. This is an honest point of view which one might follow for a purpose. But Ike's purpose is to satisfy his pride, instead of an attempt to reach the truth. Anything less than truth is a betrayal of the self--a rejection of one's own humanity.

For Ike, man's greatest sin is one of pride. If we are Christians we must accept this as the reason for Satan's and man's fall. But Ike sees this pride in terms of man's attempt to claim, own and label land, and then, in the South, to go even further and claim black men as slaves. Cass cannot see



this. He does not see how God could have allowed these things to go on without punishment if they were so wrong. Both men are once more partially right, partially wrong. There is a punishment against the white man in his deep guilt, and his inability to face his sin. Carothers shows this when he cannot call his negro child "son". Buck and Buddy show it in their attempts to make things easier for the negro. It is also true, however, that negroes did, at times, accept and live happily in their slavery, while certain white men saw no wrong in what they were doing. Ike, instead of teaching them, scorns and casts them off.

Both men can agree that man needs a truth to live by, but one's is a heartless truth while the other's is also a little too complacent and, at the same time, not critical enough of the human situation. When Ike looks at the ledgers, he sees only greed, cruelty, ignorance, incest, miscegenation, suicide, hate and folly. For him it is not a record of a family's achievement, but only proves that pride and ownership lead to decline and a life of vice, worthless and sinful. The only actions which he can praise are those of Carothers, his father and Buddy to make some restitution to the negroes. This, for him, is an "amelioration", a first step forward in making some restitution, even if the actions are only attempts to ease one's own conscience. Ike is justified in working for better conditions for the negroes. But he goes about it in a stern, judging fashion. He does not realize that, in condemning the wrongs of his family, he is judging them. His pride is of a deeper sort than theirs,

although he does not see it. Error, passionate frenzy, weaknesses, are not recognized and passed over but are righteously judged without sufficient knowledge and compassion. Ike will be too good to belong to this family, which gave him life. Any good which they might have done, any dream, any creation, is cast aside by the Pilate figure who cannot allow his family's past to soil him. Ike will achieve the amelioration by rejection, but it will only be an amelioration of the self. He attempts to rationalize this as his mission, whereas he will only be responsible to himself and for himself.

No one can deny the truth of Ike's statement that America is potentially the "new egg", that it is blessed by God with abundances, and that it could be the new hope, new dream, possibly even new Eden for man. Anywhere where men dream together, not a false unreal vision, but a human ideal, there can be a striving for the endurance of man, a working towards a better life in the image of holiness. But to argue that the white man has lost his chance, to see only failure and greed in the old world, to imagine that it is only "gnawed bones",<sup>46</sup> is much too one-sided and pessimistic. Ike is saintly and the vision of evil repulses him. But he is often blinded by judgments of others, hence failing to analyze his own motives. It is not enough to accuse and judge. Man's role is to be aware of the self and to be compassionate, to understand, and to share one's heart with others. This is Faulkner's stand. The one who recognizes wrongs and is offended by them should not merely express aversion and escape. The Nazarene

never did; nor did any of his disciples and martyrs. Fonsiba's husband does not deny the white man his chance to join in salvation of men. Ike repudiates this, continues his castigation of the white man. Ultimately, he will not even think of his wife, but refuses to give her the home and land, the way of life she needs in order to support her half of the marriage. Love, being human, is not without its conditions and needs. But Ike once married the forest, and, since it is death, he is married to death. The forest heart will not pulsate in him. He remains the heartless celibate, the last of a line which refuses to love and accept love.

It seems that both Ike and Cass are wrong, although Cass fails to embrace the truth through ignorance, as one lost without a redeemer, while Ike fails through pride and selfishness, as the redeemer who will not save anyone but himself. It would seem that Ike has sufficient sanctity, understanding and courage, and that his saintliness would lead him to leadership instead of misunderstood martyrdom, if he would only try to live with others, instead of apart from them in isolation. The internal polemics are certainly much fuzzier than the clarity of experience witnessed in Ike's movement towards the twenty-first year.

In part five, we move backward to Ike's eighteenth year and the last trip to the forest. Once more Faulkner turns to the clear narrative style, implying that the ordered, telescoped vision from a somewhat removed point of view gives a much more meaningful, precise evaluation of the event. Again we join Ike in a vision of the forest.

The time in June, but, ironically enough, summer carries with it not only life but a strong sense of doom and death which pervades the forest. There is nothing left here now for Ike but memories. What has happened is irrevocable, since one cannot "change the leopard's spots" without changing the nature of the leopard. There is a strong feeling that each man must cope with destruction and evil in reality. De Spain has absolutely turned his back on the forest. He is exclusively the land-owner and businessman now, who seeks to sell the lumber rights of this forest for profit. But he reserves the land with the graves on it from this deal, showing that he has a great respect for the bear, Sam and their passe way of existence. He honors their spirits as well as the spirit of progress which he helps to initiate. This is a compassionate yet realistic point of view. De Spain feels deeply about this area, but to hold it or return to it would only be fixation, a projection into a past, now weakened and fading, a past which must die gracefully and honorably, as it lived. He will not allow it to languish, will not allow himself to live bitterly and selfishly on memories. He knows that any life in the forest, now, must be anti-climactic. Hence, he sells it rapidly and refuses to return to it with Ike. He sees that one must only live the past spiritually now, must preserve it in memory, or else it becomes cheap, imperfect and weak, a lifeless parasite. Ike cannot understand this, but, in his characteristically righteous fashion, sees that others have betrayed what has given so much. Once more, only Ike is "right", and he must go alone.

The first step into loneliness and the dying reveals that he is a victim, not victor. The other members of the hunting party see that they will have to get along without their hunt. At this point, he "looked no more save toward the wall of wilderness ahead within which he would be able to hide himself from it once more anyway".<sup>47</sup> Ike's idealism is eventually becoming an escapism. He rejects life for death. But when the forest is destroyed, it is doubtful that he will be able to hide forever. He will be forced to face the new world because his shelter will be gone. Will he then be able to implement the spirit of this death, implanting it in a second growth? Pride and humility, understanding and righteousness, must weigh the choice for him.

The train, once "a harmless snake", once "noisy" and "puerile",<sup>48</sup> and toylike is now much more portentous. Ike realizes that he will "return no more". The shrill little train will now play a role in destroying the forest. There is a great contrast between the noisy, violent, time-conscious outside world and the "green solitude" of the woods with their timelessness. Nature is ordered by its own sort of time, with its seasons, life and death, creation and destruction. Ike finds his mind drawn back towards the past when Sam was his "spirit father" and nature his and Sam's real parent. Now "the woods would be his mistress and his wife".<sup>49</sup> Later, he will accept another wife, the one who makes her appearance at the end of part four. But in truth, Ike betrays both, partly because one cannot be true to the two, and partly because he attempts to be always right, and, hence, continually feels

that he is doing what is best for both--a mere rationalization. His own need to be saintly comes first and, consequently, he poisons both forest and wife but fails to be possessed by them or do what is necessary for them. In order to be a "Nazarene", he must go all the way and become a carpenter, who chops down trees from the beloved forest. Meanwhile, he will not give in to his wife's needs for a home and respect. Indeed, Ike is using them, capitalizing on his "ownership" in sating his thirst for justice.

There are things in the forest which draw him from his dreams. First, he finds the surveyor's markers, "lifeless and shockingly alien".<sup>50</sup> They do not belong to this world, but are an attempt to mark it for destruction. They cannot be thought away. Their inanimateness forewarns of a doom to come to a place where "death did not even exist".<sup>51</sup> Ike finds that the graves have vanished, since nature did not need to mark off her dead as inveterately and obviously as the surveyors marked off the forest for its death. There is a complete disparity between the two points of view. One is only life without death, which records the past and which maintains and recalls the spirits of the physically dead without the need for any concrete reminder. For death here is not a forgetting, not a finality, but part of a natural process which will never kill memories, never repudiate the past. Indeed, past is equally important in comparison to present and future. So seasons go to come again, and the spirit of Sam and the Old Bear, with their pride, courage and endurance, live on in Ike.

But as the outside world closes in to eliminate this forest, Ike seeks to hold on to what has happened. Everything to do with death has healed into "concordant generality".<sup>52</sup> It shares an unimposing place in the order of nature, an organic part which must follow from life, just as life will again follow from it. One does not find it to be inexorable, stone-cold, marked off with a reminder,

not held fast in earth but free in earth and  
not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused  
of every myriad part.<sup>53</sup>

The thematic core, freedom and bondage, strikes a strong note here. Death can be a freeing, not merely a bondage to destruction, to a finitude which shares the human essence. More can be promised if man is free "but of (the) earth", if man, like the forest, dies into the eternal life through the paradoxical link between soul and body. As man, he must be humble, must spread his heart, must know his limitations if he is ever to become a pure spirit. Saints are made by self-creation, through struggle and trial, not through mere negation of vice and temptation. Man, this complex creature, is "undiffused of every myriad part". Man is his own contradiction but can be so because he, like the Whitman "I", is also large, also "contain(s) multitudes".<sup>54</sup>

It is while realizing what death is that Ike sees the snake. The young man has not only found death in his world, but its counterparts--evil and destruction--are also present. The outside world has a "snake-like train", shrill, hysterical, but this snake is "concordant too with the wilderness".<sup>55</sup> Finally, it becomes clear that death is an invasion, but is

also the result of internal limits and faults visible in the forest. Each world must have its own sense of death. Man has lost his Eden and now he must find that it is not a piece of land where one may escape to, but a state of mind which must survive in the midst of struggle, an end which our courage and compassion, humility and pride, will allow us to achieve. It is now that Ike must make his decision. There is no need to cling to the forest. To do so, he must adhere to the dying, both the passing forest and his own rightness. He must prove that he has a heart, must turn away from death, allowing it only to inspire him in the creation of a new life. But, from part four, we know that he will be a refuser, will fail to accept death and evil as potentially within all forms of life and culture because they lie dormant within all men. Ike allows the great sin of pride to rage, but, being the most pernicious evil, it does not allow man to see its actual nature, but convinces him that he is all the better for having it. With the choice before him, and the knowledge of what he has done, we can weigh the importance of this crisis and Ike's decision. Turning his back on the one snake, refusing to believe in the other, he fails to see that he is his own serpent. He becomes a mass of frustrations, refuting his heritage but living off the "other" world, righteously fleeing to the dead life but using its lumber.

Following the recognition of the snake, Ike moves on to find Boon. He sees him beneath the gum tree, "hysterical". Boon is the final element of destruction, of disorder in order. It is he who ultimately reflects Ike's point of view, although



the young man fails to see it. Boon has never been a good shot. He now finds a tree full of squirrels and claims them, but his gun will not aid him in killing them. It is Boon and his kind, pitiful yet destructive because of their disordered character, their smallness, who destroy their own chances for truth. Possibly this is where Ike fits in, although he is obviously more blameworthy than the other, because he has the intelligence and has had the training to prepare him for knowledge and understanding. Boon cannot cope with a situation he has helped to precipitate, and he knows it. He is miserable and hysterical in his guilt and frustration. Ike, however, lives on his own perversion, bending the truth to form his own justice. He thinks that he can cope with the situation. It is because Boon will not learn from his experiences that he cannot gain any pride. Contrary to Ike, he allows his emotions to lead him about capriciously. He is too wrapped up in his greed and frustration to recognize the person to whom he is talking. Boon's hysterical desire to kill, to suppress by power in order to possess, represents the order of society. Clearly, the question is more one of content than form. Each way of life can be subjected to relatively the same beauty and ugliness. In fact, Boon's desire is much like the train's shrill and shabby cruelty, both clumsy and trivial, yet the symptoms of real doom. Hogganbeck claims something he can never own. Chances are that he will never kill the squirrels because he is such a poor hunter. Ike does not recognize that by remaining passive and righteous he is also being false to his aim. Ike acts as the judge,

plays the role which he has no right to at all. In the end, we have the two points of view--one obsessed with possession, the other with escaping it. Eventually, they are the same selfish ways, since, in wanting to have the squirrels we find greed, but in wanting to keep all virtue, we have pride.

It is ironic that Ike will sacrifice his humanity for a holiness which is ill-gotten. Obsessed with appearances, he forgets to see the purpose and reality of his moral stand. Ike has come across evil, but has not truly faced it. It is not right to judge others. He fails to see that there is no such thing as completely clear-cut right and wrong, that Boon, the train, and even the snake, even death, are not completely evil unless our souls make them unreal so. The surveyors, Boon, the train, all greedy and anxious to label, to possess, to enchain, kill and destroy, will not be able to annihilate the spirit of the wilderness. Not even death can do this. It is only the proud, heartless creature, man, who can do it. Ike has seen the snake and the bear, the curse and the glory of Eden in their outward forms. But it will be difficult to recognize them within. At twenty-one, he is still acting, still fooling himself with unjustly obtained probity, achieved through selfishness. Will he ever go beyond this?

Faulkner proves, once more, that time is man's, that it is an order superimposed on the human predicament, which has a convenience, not a truth. It is ours, not a control on us, since without man it does not exist. The human soul can be moved just as much by the past as by the present. It is what the time orders which really matters, not the order itself.

Truth can only be found in experience, and Cass, by quoting Keats' ode, explains that the heart knows no order. Hence, it is that Part V of "The Bear" follows Part IV without doing damage to the theme, characterization, or even narration of the plot. It is possible to see this as odd, probably a little awkward at first. But, accepting the story as one structure, one unit, we see that Faulkner is making sense. The interposition of Part IV is uncomfortable, to say the least, to one who does not understand the author's intent. It lacks the clear serenity of vision in the other sections, replacing it with foggy, impressionistic non-sequiturs. The profundity of experience is replaced by a profundity of words. A mass of thought full of judgments, rationalizations, over-generalizations and questions predominate here. This should be clearly an indication that Ike's life turns into an absurd one, absurd in the true modern ideological sense of the word, the cacophonous life without harmony, because man has revolted against the order. Absurdity may have a social, political or religious aetiology. It may be blamed on the not-I, but, here, in Faulkner, it is rooted in the unreality of a man who betrays his own essence. Faulkner proves, in many of his works, that the past is part of our present, and, in a sense, inescapable. Ike's youth is as determining as Sutpen's, but whether we will allow ourselves to become obsessed with what is unreal, whether we will betray ourselves with false dreams, is our choice. What we first witness in parts one through three is drastically altered, and, at this point, we wonder why. But Faulkner is not prepared to leave us to

answer this puzzle for ourselves, since this question is an integral part of what he is trying to do in this novel.

Hence, we have part five, which, from its location, we automatically interpret in terms of what has gone before, although the stylistic texture and the chronology of the narrative stretches it backward to the first three sections. The serene prose and the topic, the return to the woods and Ike's youth, present a location and atmosphere following directly from part three. This is as it should be, since, torn between the disparate visions of Ike's childhood and maturity, we are forced to relate them, evaluate their positions and analyze the motives behind them. At the same time, we are looking back from a future stand, which, although not altogether clear, at least tells us that Ike gives up his land. Part five, the mediating section between two decisions, two movements, is then a key to understanding what happened, what Ike failed or refused to recognize. It is this last section, placed as it is at the end, and chronologically dealing with the section between youth and maturity, which defines the deep irony hinted at and confusedly revealed in parts one to three, and then in four. It is the bitterness and hysteria at the end of part four which one cannot fail to notice that puts real doubt in the reader's mind. If Mrs. McCaslin is a whore, a tempter, she is not clearly and totally presented as such. Her hysteria is rooted in chaos, in unreality, a giving in to the "them", the destructive forces from which Ike will not save her. If she is bitter, if she uses her woman's wiles to trick, to guile, at least she is pitiful. But Ike, stone-

cold, severe, relentless, appears despicable here. Can one be so engrossed in his own life and decisions that he can fail to recognize that he is one among men, is depended upon and dependent, is capable of saving another or causing this person to yield to failure? The frenzy of her behavior and the chill of Ike's reaction to her question are presented at opposite poles. He will use her, but will not save her when she threatens his "rightness".

The last section, then, is a coda, a recapitulation and conclusion clarifying what has gone before it. It recalls the past and approaches the future of the twenty-first year. Hence, it gathers together Ike's life in the woods, his spiritual growth, his inability to kill the bear, because of humility and courage in balance in his life, and, on the other side, his life in the town, his spiritual strophy, his inability to accept his heritage because of humility and courage being outbalanced by intense pride. Boon's hysterical behaviour is an early reflection of the hysterical laughter of Ike's wife. It is ironic that the former does not want Ike to have any part of the possessions, the squirrels, whereas the latter tries to seduce him into claiming his possessions. But then Mrs. McCaslin is a force which Ike and his line have fought down. In this battle, Ike feels that he is stressing his individuality, rejecting the McCaslin line, but he is all the more a part of it. In rejecting appearances, he fails to recognize the reality. The McCaslin world has been womanless. In the whole of Go Down, Moses there are few women besides the negresses, and these are used

without consideration. The hunt can eventually be seen as something sterile and incomplete, only a partial challenge, because it is a totally male world and is rapidly fading. Ironic as it may seem, Ike's choice is precisely part of the family policy. He is, indeed, the McCaslin heir, as he fails probably as badly as they do to make his life really worthwhile, to be a person among men, to bear fruit, to help mankind, to endure because the heart is strong and infinite. Just as he fails his wife, for the same reason he fails Boon. Love, primarily sexual, must grow into compassion, brotherly love. Instead, it seems to stop with a bear, a deer or some beast unequal to man. It is not because men do not marry, not because they give in to lust and fail to atone or accept their part in it, that they are wrong. These can only be symptomatic of a deeper and more subtle failure: the failure to become, to move out of the inhuman, the unreal; the inability to lie with a real lover, to help a friend, to save an enemy, to agree with life's progress.

Ike, or Isaac, is not the rescued sacrificial victim who eventually leads his people. Love is not at all reckoned with here, although it is love which saves Abraham's Isaac. It is right to respect God first, to be stern before his laws, unwavering in your trust. But what is all this without love? Does not this sacrifice just as the actual Sacrifice of the New Testament, prove that love is the real and only reason for this immolation? God certainly does not criticize Abraham's love for his son, does not tell him to reject such things. It is this love, struggle, doubt and final decision which

makes Abraham such a great father. Our love of the Lord, the Bible, states, must be greater than that for man, but we must also love the God-like in others. God challenged Abraham to see the strength of his love, his certainty. But, at the same time, he rejoiced in a father's love for his son. Ike, to the contrary, sacrifices everything unjustifiably, as he becomes led by his own pride, unwilling, and gradually unable, to help anyone else since he is not wise to his own self-betrayal. The pursuit of sainthood becomes a pursuit for selfish, inhuman aims. This is the central irony which Faulkner unfolds here.

Part V is, then, the osmotic membrane, through which the two subjects, youth and maturity, dreams and ideals, pass as they become purified and linked inextricably in tragedy. Through it, we recognize the weeds of failure that choke the blossoms of promise. Because we see the degeneration from hope to disappointment previous to the reading of the final section, this coda becomes a source for the discovery of what went sour in Ike's life. It is in "Delta Autumn" that the tragedy borders on self-discovery, as Ike, with little forest to hide behind, must face the "hostile" open fields and his own life's worth. McCaslin's decision to repudiate his claims and Faulkner's hints of Uncle Ike's sadly ascetic life to come, a life without compassion, a lonely life without purpose, are not based on a sudden transfiguration which cannot be explained.

Fate does not merely enter momentarily, and with fortuitous ruthlessness, doom Ike's promising existence to a mordant future. It is Ike's choice, and his opinions in part four, his troubled

decision, his inability to recognize his own confusion, are not sudden chance occurrences. Indeed, they exist as a revelation of a character which is just as hysterical as Boon's. Eventually, Ike throws off his ownership, his heritage, his responsibilities and, with these, his humanity. Duty, responsibility, mean nothing to Ike because love and compassion are only ingrained and directed toward the self. Ingrown hair causes festering and infection. Consequently, Ike, although he does not immediately witness it, is a no-saint without petitioners, without followers--a saint unto himself. Ike shares in what Auden so aptly calls "negative inversion"<sup>56</sup> and the "distortions of ingrown virginity" which the character, ironically, nurtures in himself in his attempt to be completely pure.

Certainly it is possible to say that Ike is pitiful rather than villainous. For Faulkner, compassion and pathos are not at odds with tragedy. "Delta Autumn" certainly makes this point clear. But this is very different from viewing him as a Faulkner hero. R.W.B. Lewis<sup>57</sup> gives him heroic status, but does so grudgingly. Somehow, although it seems surprising in such a perceptive critic, Mr. Lewis has missed the point, although the rest of his book so clearly intimates what really is involved here. Perhaps the American scene is too close to the critic for him to distinguish what really is involved, although he approaches Silone, Camus and Greene, among others, with accuracy. Picaresque and saint are the two words he seeks to apply to the paradox which is such a strong current in modern literature. Lewis recognizes the



two traits in Camus, but does not recognize that Faulkner is equally humanistic, although the Nobel prize speech makes this more than obvious. The paradox is the root of balanced equation. Without the picaresque or the saintly quality, the matter falls apart into disassociated and unbalanced inhumanity. One cannot have the traits of one without the other, if one is to be truly human, to really "be". We must be humble concerning our picaresque traits, proud concerning our saintly struggle.

But one should never suppress his human limitations, repudiate them. They are part of a tension within, a struggle, happy and yet troubled, to surpass oneself. We use our knowledge of ourselves as a means by which to leap into faith. There is a struggle between what we are and what we would like to be. Neither aspect must be repudiated, since each is part of the same life--one the channel, one the goal, but not so clearly or separately defined before achievement. For how can one achieve sainthood without committing oneself to the challenge of love, of courage, of pride and humility? Saintliness does not appear overnight via some clearly positive or negative formula. It is more than a denial, a refusal, a simple act. One does not merely change one's trappings, but must also change within one's heart. Ike faces no challenge, no doubts, feels no misery, no hate, and hence, cannot be the saint that Nancy, the whore and the murderer in Requiem for a Nun<sup>58</sup>, became, at least, in Faulkner's vision.

Conflict is the heart of "The Bear" and it is probably

because of this that critics have misinterpreted the work. Its form, theme, its development are complex, but are more generally agreed upon than the ultimate value of Ike's life is. How the story ends is the question that needs solving. It seems that those who interpret it in the vein of redemptive literature, as a true American myth, moving from dream to actuality, primarily a Bildungsroman revealing the hero's growth into awareness, must have to admit that Ike not only redeems himself but is a redeemer. Is Ike's the vision that one would like to see spread about the country? Is it the dream or the nightmare, the universal panacea or the endemic disease? Indeed we cannot find grounds for such an apotheosis of this person and his quest. It has been stated that Ike seems to fail because the author has failed him, because he is not a suitable topic for the novel. Such criticism removes guilt from both novelist and reader in so much as it is an unfortunate topic which cannot be handled well. The only onus on the author is not failure as a novelist but lack of perception in choice of topic. Certainly it is difficult to create a saint in a novel, since this literary form evokes, above all, the human, the flesh and blood people we are. But what seems even more obvious from an analysis of "The Bear" is that one cannot create anything near to a saint out of Ike. Ike is not a "near miss", then, but becomes discovered as a failure in himself. The lack of such understanding places the onus on the reader's ignorance.

"Delta Autumn", even more than the earlier story, follows this through to make certain that the proper value is achieved. Ike is not Faulkner's "miss" any more than

Quentin and Sutpen are his personal inabilities expressed. Faulkner, not through personal words, not through biased assessments, but from an omniscient point of view, within the characters' minds, presents them to us, not as separable from our souls, but as objective representations of part of us--of the human situation--which we must judge. Certainly, Faulkner feels compassion for his characters, because they are human, after all. This is the basic quality which they all possess, although the degrees to which this humanity grows or dies are numerous. It is difficult to find the character in his novels, however, with whom we do not sympathize at least somewhat. Furthermore, for Faulkner, there is no simple point of view. Cass and Ike possess opposite stands which need not be opposites. It is because Ike has achieved so much during his youth and presents such good arguments at the commissary that we favor him at first. But, in the end, he is more of a failure than his cousin, because he aims higher, his vice is deeper and, therefore, his unreality more all-encompassing.

R.W.B. Lewis, in his Picaresque Saint, complains about the rigidity of Ike's character. In retrospect, we recognize our inability to acquire any vision of the mature Ike other than one objectively and hazily witnessed through his conflict with others--Boon, Cass, his wife. He is a shadowy person, opposed to other people, misguided and incapable of helping others because of his own spiritual rigidity.

It is so easy to "fall" in the direction of the all too human or the all too saintly: Ike McCaslin no doubt suffers artistically from the latter mistake.<sup>59</sup>

From this we must conclude that Lewis interprets the work as Faulkner's attempt to provide us with an American myth wherein the hero is apotheosized--an attempt which does not succeed too well.

The question of the basis of failure is central, since, if the author fails, the work does not merit detailed consideration. Our conception of "The Bear" as a novel wherein tragic irony prevails, takes the opposite approach coming to the same conclusion for obvious reasons. Indeed, failure is the ultimate value which applies. It is Ike's failure, inherent and inescapable because the struggle for sainthood does not begin at the top, does not reject challenges, does not cancel conflict and aim to be always right. Picaresque and saint are combined because they are paradoxically consistent as the human and spiritual, the humility and the pride, defining ambition and knowledge of one's limitations as dual and mutually co-existential.

In his chapter on Camus, Mr. Lewis is much more accurate in estimating the roots of the modern image of sainthood. He quotes Camus:

'I hate self-satisfied virtue' Camus told an interviewer. 'I hate the despicable morality of the world, and I hate it because, just like cynicism, it ends by depriving man of hopes and preventing him from assuming responsibility for his own life with all its terrible burden of crimes and grandeur.' The whole basis of the novelistic image of a "picaresque saint" is in that statement----It contains the implication that the characters----remain separated----into sterile self-satisfaction. A man can be corrupted by too much virtue, as well as by too much vice----; the best means of rejuvenation is a periodic return to the depths, to the reality of the human hell.<sup>60</sup>

Here we have a strongly humanistic stand, one which the author of the Nobel prize speech could well accept. We find it in Faulkner in his condemnation of weak institutionalized faith, especially Calvinism which does not link man to his world but seeks to disassociate him from it. A religion of this sort fails badly, because it will not allow man to be what he is. What he needs is something to strive for by means of his present life. He needs to cross the route from the material to the spiritual by accepting them in confluence, suppressing neither and glorifying both. Without this acceptance, religion betrays man and he it, because his stand is unreal--one which does not exist at all. In verity, we are shaking our heads at what we are and claiming to be what we are not. Ike, then, has become selfish in his inability to let go of "despicable morality". Religion, morals, social ethics, which do not allow man "to be", to discover his God by way of what he is, to find in his doubt and struggle a hope and understanding, fail to be more than mockeries of what they profess to be. Morality may be stiff, unswerving with respect to what it demands, but it must also be flexible, allowing man freedom to create himself, to repair wrongs, to erase his guilt. That which is only severe and uninviting places up a grotesque abutment between man and God which either repels him, imprisons him, or becomes a false image for him to adore. Hope, the struggle, failure, the great endurance and wisdom, which come with our will to prevail, belong to us and stagnant complacency cheats us of them.

Instead of assuming the "burden of crimes" as well as

the grandeur, Ike, satisfied with the latter and unhappy with the former, seeks to be a complete saint by being a passive castigator. But man cannot only have what he wants out of life--cannot repudiate the undesirable. Because he is unwilling to take it all, to fight and give in to life, he gets nothing. A saint does not enumerate, judge and deny the responsibility for the crimes of his lineage. The final irony is defined when Ike witnesses the fact that he is not the master of life, but the prisoner of death and that he has, therefore, not been able to kill its snake any more than he could kill its bear. But this illumination does not blossom until in the face of crisis.

Faulkner is the humanist, then, who sees in unreality, in the acceptance of its tenets, the rejection of love, escapism, denial and excessive pride, an acceptance of things inhuman. Mere disgust with the inhuman and humans, the cruelty of people and their institutions, only leads to a subtler form of the same thing. Unlike the Biblical Isaac, Ike's promise does not become fulfilled because his life is a sacrifice of all that is human, instead of to and through his humanity. The struggle and striving for Godliness must remain only that--a battling attempt. One seeks to find an image of God, a relationship with Him, which is humble and is based on a commitment to struggles in everyday life. Ike throws his burden on to Roth's back, a back that is quite weak. In "Delta Autumn", we see how precarious the young man's position is, yoked to a heritage which he does not know. Roth struggles where Ike could probably succeed, but the latter, instead of

helping, selfishly ignores the reason for Roth's troubled existence. Instead, Ike will push him off his perilous stand, or, rather, cause it to crumble beneath his feet, as we see in the action of the following story. Ike selfishly destroys his own marriage, refuses to help the people about him, all because of commitments to something ultra-human. We cannot be God, cannot ever promise ourselves or Him so much that we exceed our actuality, thus repudiating what we are and what He has given us. "Delta Autumn" ultimately clarifies the conception of spiritual pride and love as two opposite poles on the Faulknerian scale. It is the latter story which seals the testament, congeals the fluidity and hope of "The Bear" and takes the vision of conflict and flux to its ironic completion. It is an ultimate autumnal fixity since the old sterile Ike has no climactic fruit, but stands, stranded in the forest vestiges, parasite unto himself, awaiting death. The forest will have lasted to his end, but it is no longer thick enough to conceal him and cushion him from the blows of life's struggles. Will truth creep in on him before he is done? Will it then be too late? The irony is that he is too weak to keep it back but too bone-brittle to accept its verity. His pride has "protected" him even from self-knowledge and it is only when the day is done that evil performs its most nefarious deed. It betrays itself.

## CHAPTER IV

## DELTA AUTUMN: DREAM TO NIGHTMARE

"Delta Autumn", epitaph to "The Bear", epitaph to Ike's life, is the final perception of the meaning of "failure". For Faulkner, we do not loosely apply this word to whatever does not succeed. As men we are limited and, hence, are not the children of achievement. Does Ike fail the human failure, as man, or does he fail because of a deeper vanity, a failure to accept himself, life and hence his stand in relation to reality? Faulkner is correct in seeing that this word is, intrinsically, a value-judgment, an expression of worth. At the same time, he also sees that it is relative to the meaning of success and the standards applied, as well as to the talents and stamina of the person under focus. If we are not allowed to judge Ike as far as heaven or hell is concerned, we can judge him as a man, as one of us. It is this humanity which is at stake, his success as a man. We can only observe, express compassion for, and understand his soul's condition as part of the human predicament. We can never make the final move, never the irrevocable step into an area where we do not belong. The ultimate fate of the individual is between him and his Master. To move in here would be to intrude as Ike does. It would be an evaluation of others, extremely one-sided and based on self-complacency, that deleterious factor of the righteous and compassionless virtue-pursuer.



"For more than fifty years" Ike has come to "the last hill".<sup>61</sup> It is autumn on the peak and the peak of autumn. In the title, we have the hint of what the story deals with-- the climax of life. From this point there is no going back. It is also the "delta" and the "autumn" within. Faulkner, then, quickly defines the old age and finality of Ike's life, his journeys and the forest.

We are now far from part one of "The Bear". There we met an inexperienced boy full of dreams about to face overwhelming odds, his own ignorance and lack of skill symbolized in a journey into unknown and vast forests for a vanishing unseen bear. There are no bears here now. It is a puny little wooded area that is familiar to those who pass through. The mystery, power and terrifying beauty are gone. For Ike, these trips to the woods seem to have been an attenuation of the old tradition, possibly not as complete but at least similar to it. Now even the appearances begin to show that the world is dead and that what Ike has done is that he has refused to bury it, demanding that it exist in a languishing, puny, mockery of itself.

The proportions of the two worlds, the health of one and the atrophy of the other, the new manner of entering the woods are all obvious now and cannot be ignored. It is difficult to recall Ike's first timeless journey into the forest's womb as he now moves "faster and faster", denying his part in its rape. Civilization intrudes more and more ruthlessly on the world which it will not release.

He still shoots well, but the emphasis has shifted from

the hunt, the striving, to the slaying--

still killed almost as much of the game he  
saw as he ever killed<sup>62</sup>

The repetition of the murderous word is new and harsh in our ears. It is "kill now", the selfish taking of another's life for one's own possession. It seems reasonable enough to derive a new uglier purpose behind the hunt which never existed before. Behind the cold passivity, the ache and the sleeplessness, the faintly warm, is a frenzy without fuel, feeding only on the chill of despair. Rain and November offer no excitement to Ike, provide no heat at all. The chill is also indicative of the cold heart without the most inward fires of inspiration. All things, including the man, are old, incongruous, sterile, weak, stiff and frenzied. Deep within the calm of despair is a hysteria which remembers the past and wonders what has happened. He continues to tell himself each time "that this hunt would be his last".<sup>63</sup> In coming or in refusing to come, Ike could find no peace. Instead, like a volitionless automaton, he returns to the forest, which, as a guide and a carpenter, he has helped to obviate.

The young men cannot be expected to understand the forest as he does since, for them, it has always been a dying way of life, a place for sport, for "kill" and even this is not simply fun. Life is now superficial, rootless, a perfunctory systole and diastole in time without any known purpose. Men like Ike, who have known and lived in the old way, have not fostered its virtues, its spirit, in the new. The men's attitude towards the hunt is only indicative of a deeper despair, an apathy and rootless anger. How can decisions be made,

values induced, without intellectual and spiritual rockbed beneath? Ike is only a guide, and old Uncle, the avuncular museum curator who is simply associated with the past. Hence he shows them how to destroy animals, how to "kill". It is all a negative lesson, and, when they follow it well, Ike can accuse, can blame righteously this new world which has none of the features of the old one. They already know how to destroy the woods, and now they know how to kill its contents. But when will they learn what to put in its place? Here we have the basis of the unrest, the doubt and self-torment which the young endure.

Legate, whose name indicates that he is the ambassador, the go-between, who receives the arguments of both, sits in the middle, with Roth and Ike on either side. The old nightmare returns, since Roth is Cass' grandson, and, worse yet, an image of the ancestor of the family, "aquiline, saturnine, a little ruthless".<sup>64</sup> Ike has not managed to destroy the past but has only shifted it on to another in denying his part in this life. And even this past is not as pure as it was, since, although it had vices and discrepancies, it was lively, while today it is riddled with despair. Hence Faulkner presents Roth "tempered a little, altered a little, staring sombrely through the streaming windshield".<sup>65</sup> Ike must face the young man (Roth at this point is forty) who, without choice, without free will, has had to accept the old man's burden of inheritance and, with it, of his conscience. Roth, who seems to have some capabilities, some energy which needs to be used creatively, is portrayed as the bitter and incapable individual, sterile

not in himself but because Ike has gelded his life.

Ike seeks to step out of the world, to cancel his commitments, but life is not this easy. In doing so, Cass, Roth, and in between, Zack, must accept the weight of his conscience, of commitments which do not totally belong to them and which he does not prepare them to accept. Roth is the individual who will carry on after the rest have gone, after the woods are removed and his relations are dead.

Again Faulkner stresses the ultimate value of love. Roth is blessed with a small heart which could expand. Only with someone else, only by creating and being created can he make a go of life, can he accept it and face its challenges. His hunt is a quest, a search for the "doe" of his existence. Will he kill or will he find understanding as Ike once did? Herein is the great terror of pride, the worst vice, the door to evil, its archetypal master, its hell. It is not the solitary sin. It seeks to be, but it eventually sacrifices the innocent by charming them, or by overwhelming them in their innocence. How, without the exercise of the heart, without the new covenant, can one live in the modern world with the responsibility of the plantation, its heritage, its confused past and more deeply confused future? Ike helps Roth to see nothing since Ike remains true only to himself and his views. In a word, he is sacrificing Roth. Roth has no reality, yet has no unreality either. He is the groping unmade individual, formless, without any edges on his character, any firm faith. The story "Delta Autumn" reveals his inability to find his life-source since he is weak and untaught.

Ike, who has been shown the way, who has been given no proviso, no makeshift "ersatz" reality but who has been encouraged to find the truth for himself, will not be so much of a guide for the others. He will not allow his knowledge to define the highest degree of reality--that of unselfish love and compassion, the awaking from reveries towards a myth in motion, the discovery of "the heart" as a metaphor for all that is beyond logic and rests in the failure to be great and hence, in the success of being greater.

Roth is equally victimized by Ike's failure to come to terms with life. The fatalistic tinge in the atmosphere of "The Bear" is deepened here. Certainly, in both stories, there are facts which one must face, events and elements that will not be side-tracked. But here, with autumn at its peak, at the delta, past and present, decision and indecision gather together as the action moves towards a climax. Both Roth and Ike must make a choice either to face life or to turn away from it.

The argument may seem overly subtle, but Roth, although he is bound to the chains of fate, still has a will of his own. It is only that his struggle is less likely to occur effectively, self-creation less likely to succeed, since Ike has done a good job of pacifying his nephew and accustoming him to the easy comfort of indecision. The young man cannot really fight, since he does not know what he wants out of life. Roth, then, is not a classical tragic hero because he lacks self-knowledge, is conscious of no flaw in his character; he is the victim of never-ending puzzlement, the maze which

drags one deeper and deeper into confusion. He broods, battles his own heart, both rejects Ike's glorification of the past and accepts his advice, killing purposelessly in his weak and ineffective struggle to find life beyond the chaos he will not escape. Violence and destruction, random and irrational, are poor substitutes for the self-sacrifice needed to crash outside of the dimensionless vacuum of bitter doubt. His failure is, then, at least somewhat doomed, predetermined, moving from a complex causational relationship with another will which chose to reject its freedom. simultaneously narrowing the movement of the other soul.

Roth, one of a clan which is ignorant of love, has, in his "weakness", a nature more susceptible to the humane viewpoint than his "uncle" has. This "weakness", this gap in his world that cries out for something to fill it, is all that remains of his humanity. Ike has felt no doubt, while doubt is about all that is positive about Roth's life. He has been a victim of his "uncle's" vague philosophizing, but he has also been embraced, at least slightly, by love's salutary caress. At first he remains the irresolute Hamlet of Act I, but, as Faulkner shows in the course of this story, Roth's ultimate decision favours an inhuman position--not a decision to do nothing, but a despairing slaughter of his relationship with a woman and a rejection of the creativity which this relationship offers. The eventual killing of the doe shows the issue in all its complexity. It is because there is no ethical foundation to existence, no purpose, no commitment to love that man pursues a selfish, random violence. Since life

has no order, all that man can do is bang his head against thick walls. With no faith in mankind, Roth can do nothing but reject its offerings.

Legate, the third and mediating member of the trio, states in his sarcastic tone:

'If it was just a buck he (i.e. Roth) was coming all this distance for, now. But he's got a doe in here. Of course an old man like Uncle Ike can't be interested in no doe, not one that walks on two legs--when she's standing up, that is. Pretty light-colored, too'.<sup>66</sup>

Even though he is crude and unpleasant, he is "not completely jeering".<sup>67</sup> He has the deep penetrating wisdom of a Shakespeare fool, and the wry sense of irony bares its target to the sting of the shaft of truth. This "legate" communicates, in the most unrehearsed and seemingly unphilosophical, mundane comment, the heart of the complex problem which concerns Faulkner. It is fitting that it should be stated in terms of the hunt. We have seen the universal purport of this ritual in "The Bear". But, following from this ritual must come the realization, the effect--a birth into knowledge, an acceptance of the conditions which the world offers and a striving for what we aspire to beyond the defined limits. Roth is not satisfied with "just a buck".<sup>68</sup> He wants to see his "doe". Roth feels the need for love, for a movement towards a participation in the folly and wisdom of life. But Uncle Ike "can't be interested". Love is not to be trusted, because emotion, human weakness, is involved in it. The old man's words about amelioration, communal anonymity and freedom are fine, but they are only the impetus for real charity expressed in human

commitments. In one brief statement, Legate has caused the truth to emerge. As the forest diminishes in size, the doubt of one man and the self-betrayal of another become more and more exposed. The chance for love enters, the largest and noblest thing in life. The question now is whether Ike can ignore its demands and searchings. He has the choice of breaking out of his self-made prison or of receding within it. The fact that love can now enter the forest and demand acceptance or rejection shows how open the issue has become. If the forest has allowed the woman to enter and approach its virile heart, to come near to a sporting area once closed to all but men, we wonder whether Ike will also recognize this exposure and accept it.

Roth is making a journey which could be his first for the sake of love. Ike is making a journey which could be his last for the sake of a personal morality which has turned into destructive parasitism on his own humanity. Once more the forest must be Faulkner's stage, since it is here that the cycle towards understanding began and it is here that the understanding must end. It is located on a delta, during a season when nature reaches the height of productivity, simultaneously moving towards death. Dilsey, in The Sound and the Fury, saw the "beginning and the end"<sup>69</sup> and closely associates one with the other. This is the only relevance they have, since their meaning stems from their relationship. Roth's journey for love can also be his last one and Ike's journey into self, the discovery of his self-deception, can be a re-birth. The delta, depending on what man's viewpoint



is, is both a beginning and ending. But the aura that Faulkner creates in the early pages of the story is not a promising one. The words "kill", "doe", "last", build towards a climax and even young Roth is convinced that "this will be the last of it".<sup>70</sup>

Legate asks:

'The last of deer hunting, or of doe hunting?'<sup>71</sup>

Again he pierces the facade of Ike's existence by presenting the two sides to the question. Ike hunts only "deer", the animal that he has managed to generalize, while Roth is hunting for his specific "doe". The latter is not sure whether he will affirm life or negate it--whether he is hunting in order to "kill" or in order to find a way of creating a life. If Roth ceases to search for his doe, he will also begin to hunt "deer", will forget individuality and agree to being a destroyer of something vague and abstract, disengaged from his narrow world. Following this, Ike may return to the forest, Roth may live with some women, may even marry, but rejection, at this point, at this delta, makes any following experiences superfluous, anticlimactic.

Roth's and Ike's dilemmas are intermingled. Only if they co-operate with one another will they be able to answer the queries of love. Ike will have to answer the negress: he will also have to answer to himself for his personal failure and for Roth's. The old man is caught on the horns of the dilemma. If he sends the girl to Roth, he will be disapproving of his own life. If he does not, he will be destroying something good--a potential relationship between man and woman.

But this second choice cannot be effective without the other man's consent. Ike can only help to influence and abet his choice--to act as a catalytic agent in the negation of commitment.

Edmond's reasoning in stating that this will be the last hunt originates in a doubt that the country will be able to withstand its enemies:

'After Hitler gets through with it? Or Smith or Jones or Roosevelt or Wilkie or whatever he will call himself in this country?'<sup>72</sup>

Here Roth considers his nation's leaders and ends with a strong doubt and suspicion. It is the reverse of the impressions which Ike offers in "The Bear", where America is seen as the egg, the beginning of great achievements, a country destined by Providence to be a new chosen land, where man may have another chance to begin again in innocence. For Roth, the American red balloon labeled "myth" and "dream" has been deflated. The world which he sees offers not permanence, but is superficially honest and rotten at its heart. The follies and limitations of man have turned Roth into a cynic and skeptic, especially when considered in terms of the rhetoric of the past golden age which Ike pours into his nephew's ear. The roots of this distrust are wedged deeply in arid rock-beds of misunderstanding and doubt where they find no hope to give them life. Roth, a child of our modern world, living in the age of "angst", sees little that is positive and unchanging. Ike met the snake, understood the limitations of life, the existence of pariahhood and death in his idyllic forest. But he put them out of his mind.

Roth, of the other hand, sees enemies everywhere and finds little to console him. Because he does not know love, weakness and destruction are magnified out of proportion. Even Ike, himself, found that young men need ideals, not foundationless dreams. But he cannot help his nephew to gain the proper perspective on his nightmare, because, in doing so, he would be forced to admit his retrogression to a vision without any, even the most qualified counterpart, in the actual world.

Modern man must remain corrupt, his chances for honesty and, ultimately, for sainthood, limited by his world. If this corruption is not allowed to exist, Ike will lose the grounds for his rejection of his heritage. Either the world is wrong or he is. Ike will allow no middle way out of this dilemma. Hence, he answers that a nation is "a little mite stronger than any one man or group of men".<sup>73</sup> This is an honest answer if employed genuinely, but, after all his praise of the past, the echo here is hollow and unconvincing. If this is true, why does Ike cling to the forest instead of mingling with men? Roth has no answer for this because he cannot read through the vapid words of his uncle. Ike states:

'The only fighting anywhere that ever had anything of God's blessing on it has been when men fought to protect does and fawns'.<sup>74</sup>

We wonder what is on Ike's mind when he thinks of protecting does and fawns and yet fails to do anything for women and children.

At this point, Faulkner abandons dialogue and takes the narrative into his own hands. He tells of the change in the area, with the growth of urbanization, travel, communication

and agrarianism. Again the note of finality is struck here:

Most of that was gone now. Now a man drove two hundred miles from Jefferson before he found wilderness to hunt in.<sup>74</sup>

Eventually the train introduced in the last section of "The Bear" returns here as the enemy which has just about won the battle completely.

Now no scream of panther but instead the long hooting of locomotives: trains of incredible length and drawn by a single engine.<sup>75</sup>

The train and the snake are carefully juxtaposed in the earlier story so that we might readily see one as the evil of civilization, the other as the evil of the old life:

he watched the train's head complete the first and only curve in the entire line's length and vanish into the wilderness, dragging its length of train behind it so that it resembled a small, dingy, harmless snake vanishing into weeds.... It had been harmless once.<sup>76</sup>

Later Faulkner writes: "But it was different now".<sup>77</sup>

Snake or train only differ as forms and even these are similar. Both are equivalent to the limitations, the imperfections or flaws which represent something unnatural or evil when overlooked or denied as part of life's essence. Ike saluted the snake, recognized it. At the same time, he accepted the deaths of Old Ben and Sam. He saw that their graves gained concordance with the wilderness. But these earlier recognitions have not survived. The trains are no longer toy-like but become a destructive force, a dangerous enemy challenging the forest which Ike wants to preserve. The train, like the snake, demands recognition as part of the world. Indeed, in refusing to see any benefits derived from the train, Ike considers it his personal enemy. Now, when he is an old man, "all that

remained of the old time were Indian names".<sup>78</sup> This, in itself, is a symptom of the state of the old world. All that remains are names which are meaningless to all who encounter them. His refusal to recognize the destructive forces as part of a larger pattern is rooted in the desire to recede into the forest and has caused him to cling to the smallest vestiges--labels. The confusions and partialities of such values show the imbalanced nature of Ike's world.

Ike slips into unreal dreams "until presently it seemed to him that the retrograde of his remembering had gained an inverse velocity from their slow progress".<sup>79</sup> Now not only have the "skid chains"<sup>80</sup> and ruts, the automobiles and trains impinged on the pristine forest life, but the process of recollection is also forced and contrived, and becomes a synthetic attempt to recapture the past.

Once more we see Ike as

insulated by his years and time from the  
corruption of steel and oiled moving parts  
which tainted the others.<sup>81</sup>

Certainly, Ike has escaped the corruption which a materialistic life offers to modern man. He has not suffered its inhuman, mechanical tortures which drive man into a vapid and senseless existence. But he has not done any more than escape. "Insulated" is the proper word for such a life. He has not only secured himself from the destructive powers of the new way of life, but has also insulated himself from humanity, from the creative possibilities of existence. He is a potential force which, because it is aloof and distant, is incapable of achieving anything.

The old man has nothing to offer to his nephew but a glorified past and a meaningless rhetoric, both of which lack the power necessary to stir the present. Trains, ruts, blank faces, dead trees are ugly, not merely in themselves, but because of what they signify. What Ike seems to overlook is that man may be repulsed by the flaws in the world, its potential defects, but to over-evaluate their power or to run from them is equally grotesque. The inability to exercise relative evaluation is the fault of mankind which fails to depend upon its internal powers, its collective strength. The rejection of compassion, love, sympathy, makes life's inadequacies a trial which is difficult to endure. One can only give in, as Roth does, or turn away from it, as Ike does.

The great tragedy is that Ike was potentially a priest, an evangelist who was offered more than verbal reckonings in the forest. He had understood the movement of the hunt, the birth-death cycle of existence which nature unfolded before him. But he has failed to bring about a shift in testament, to let go of the past's superficial mask. He recognizes no fixity at the center of the flux, no constancy at the core of life which moves around in the midst of change like the forest's growth in the midst of the season's mutation.

Faulkner definitely takes an ironic tone at this point. He allows Ike to slip into a romantic self-complacency. If this friendship with the forest and its creatures actually existed, we would be able to give a clear Rousseauistic interpretation to the novel. Ike would be the hero defending the primitive beauty of the old world against the corruption

and vilification caused by civilization's putrescence. This can hardly be the case, however, since Ike shares little with either man or beast. Eventually, we see the implausibility of his dream. When Ike coaxes the horses across the stream, he may be satisfied with his way of handling the animals, yet "they surged, halted then sprang scrambling down from the truck".<sup>82</sup> It hardly appears that his fanciful imaginings of an affinity with the animals are very well grounded in experience.

Nor is Faulkner's irony that of a destructive, righteously condemning nature. Ike is potentially a leader and still has the power which the old life invested in him. Eventually we find him "drawing them (i.e. the horses) by his own single frail hand".<sup>83</sup> Faulkner describes his ability to guide them across the river:

He (i.e. Ike) took the lead-ropes....and with only their heads above the surface, as though they actually were suspended from his frail and strengthless old man's hands, while the boat recrossed and each horse in turn lay prone in the shallows, panting and trembling, its eyes rolling in the dusk, until the same weightless hand and unraised voice gathered it surging upward, splashing and thrashing up the bank.<sup>84</sup>

It is paradoxical that a weak hand can guide and control the power of conscienceless creatures full of fear. Yet Ike has the calm spirit which can control the "surging" and "splashing". Certainly we do not have to look for some chimeric cause--some absurd affinity between man and beast--to explain this. It is the calm, stoic, decisive nature bestowed on Ike which allows him to be a leader. With the recognition of what the old man is doing and of what he could have done, the tragic

irony gathers its strongest force. Somewhere, between ritual and realization, between youth and old age, is a large span of years that has been lost--years that could have allowed Ike to lead, to use his strength to establish a new order. Hence, Faulkner employs a subtle irony which requests compassion instead of mockery as a reaction. The issue is complex and resists separation into theoretical blacks and whites. In dealing with Ike, we must take a humanistic, not a nihilistic, stand; the romantic and ironic tones mingle and support one another. Indeed, such statements as we find here are the heart of the humanistic stand--man a failure, mankind a success. No matter how lost Ike is to reality, he is still an old man, still possesses indestructible ties with the word and humanity. This is why he is not simply wrong--but is a "failure". This says much more. This is the only way Faulkner would treat him.

In interpreting "The Bear" and "Delta Autumn", then, we need to be conscious of the dualism of tragedy and irony. The fact is that Ike is never treated either as hero or villain, but as man. Hence, we cannot out-balance one side of the question in favor of the other. Ike must be treated as an individual and member of mankind. Because Ike would be involved in the world's beauty and extricated from the terror, the whole formulation of dream into reality is at stake here.

The double values are once more noted in the self-conflicting comment on the wilderness:

its purpose was served now and its time an  
outmoded time.<sup>85</sup>



In one sense, it is finished, its deed done. But if its time puts time out of mode, then it can escape into timelessness. "Its time" can mean many things--its length during which it existed, the moment when it outstripped the temporal world, or its own definition of time. Surely, the distinction is clearly made between the wilderness' particular time and time as a universal concept in experience. Faulkner will not allow time to become abstract, for when it does, it falsely subjugates man to its controls. At the same time, one can question whether time or a period of time can possibly outstrip or surpass itself, putting all other time into the category of something worthless and passe. Certainly, Ike would like to believe this, would like to carry the transcendent values of the wilderness with him beyond death as a rationalization for his own life. The paradox lies in the fact that, in accepting the exquisite possibilities of timelessness, he must also recognize the purpose behind the limitations of time.

Ike looks forward to his night on the cot when he "would lie...wakeful and peaceful"<sup>86</sup> since he is old and does not "have so many of them left as to waste of sleeping".<sup>87</sup> Certainly we are aroused to compassion at points like this. The old man is self-deluded in his complacency with his life. Yet he is conscious that there is not much time left for him. Enjoyment of the thoughts of the past, an attempt to savor the peace before death, are not emotions to be disdained. Helping the horses across the stream, saying grace, reminiscing--the rather moving episodes of old Ike's role as kind and avuncular foreman--have their own gentle, affirmative strength. We are

constantly reminded of Ike's abilities, his potential leadership, his inescapable humanity. These aspects of his personality only make him more deserving of our compassion, for they show that he is really a human being, overwhelmed by his unrecognized flaw.

The conflict between Roth and Ike clearly surfaces when the latter begins his discussion of the past. The old man thrives on the wilderness and his youthful years and, consequently, he depicts them as idyllically as possible with all the rhetoric he can muster. Roth's words to Ike are harsh, and yet his position deserves sympathy. In the midst of vitriolic expressions of frustration, we recognize this young man's troubled heart. After all, the one man represents power, completely uncontrolled and rootless, youthful and without concession, while the other stands for weakness, too strongly controlled, root-bound, old and full of excuses. Ike states that the best game is gone now. It is probable that Roth has heard this statement too often and, because his fiery passion and self-doubt are at the critical point, he says bitterly:

'And better men hunted it...

Go on. Say it'.<sup>88</sup>

The young man finds the crumbs of the past an insipid offering to his hungry soul. He feels vexed and insulted by Ike's rejection of the present generation since he detects disdain in this attitude. Roth not only scolds Ike for what he says, but also for what he does not say. The old man selfishly clings to the past. Only he has experienced it and he tortures his nephew by telling him how great things were, how much he

has missed and how meager life now is. This hoarding, this continual unconscious tantalizing is difficult to accept and puts the two men at odds. Past will not succumb to present. At the beginning of the narrative, Faulkner had taken great pains to present their roles as antagonistic and he now makes specific use of this conflict. Ike "again" looks "sharply"<sup>89</sup> at his kinsman. It is true that Roth has opened a wound in saying this. Ike tries to circumlocute his beliefs, but it is difficult for him to betray his "rightness". His whole concentration focuses on the past, yet he will not admit to Roth's accusation of favoritism:

'I didn't say that....There are good men everywhere, at all times. Most men are. Some are just unlucky, because most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be. And I've known some that even the circumstances couldn't stop'.<sup>90</sup>

We wonder whether Ike is doing any more than rationalizing and patting himself complacently on the back. Perhaps the vague "some" of the last sentence refers to Ike McCaslin. Ike is not telling Roth any more than that it is too bad that the circumstances, and, possibly Roth's make-up, are such as they are. The old man leaves all of this vague and general, but Roth can read between the lines of the self-satisfied comment.

The antagonism reaches a head as Roth responds:

'So you've lived almost eighty years....And that's what you learned about the other animals you lived among. I suppose the question to ask you is, where have you been all the time you were dead?'<sup>91</sup>

In Roth's opinion, Ike has risen so high, transcended the human situation so completely, that man is only "the other

animal(s) you lived among".<sup>92</sup> In trying to go above himself, he has fallen into a separate limbo, a static life cut off from his surroundings. Where has Ike been all the time he was dead? This is the major question that Ike will have to answer for himself. It is cruelly asked, since it challenges the old man's whole life. But we feel that no one has a greater right than Roth to ask it, since Ike has had a large part in creating the young man's circumstance, has unjustly thrust the heavy burden of the land rights on the brooding man's back. Roth feels the need for different circumstances and finds it difficult to cope with the ones he has, to accept them as the only possibility. Without someone else to share it, and through love and compassion, to at least raise it up to a human dignity, life seems worthless. And yet Roth's problem is further complicated by the fact that he does not know that anything specific is lacking or what the source of this emptiness is.

Roth needs someone. Unlike Ike, he does not have any self-complacency or reassurance to buttress his existence. He is the wanderer who does not have the answers, the brooder who is always groping in the darkness waiting for some light. His is the anguish of troubled thinking, of yearning for more than there seems to be, yet returning with nothing. Ike has been unfair to Roth in forcing him to accept property which becomes a misunderstood and undeserved fardel. But the old "uncle" is more unfair in his blindness, his refusal to give the young man a reason for enduring the struggle. If one could read Ike's mind, one would find him putting the blame

for Roth's troubles on the shoulders of the people who lack faith, on the new world's hollowness and inadequacy, on the young man's disbelief. In fact, one would find him placing it everywhere but where it belongs. But then Ike has refused before. He refused to compromise with Cass, to give his wife what she so desperately needed, to stick by the troubled world, to give rebirth to the dead spirits of Sam and Old Ben. It is ironically human of Ike to stick by these refusals and to take advantage of them without noticing their destructive effects. This is the way man is and he cannot be blamed for his inescapable failings. But, at the same time, although "to err is human", man must recognize the direction and purpose of his life. A saint should not err, and consequently one who errs is not yet a saint. There is once more the complex double value. We cannot blame Ike for failures which he does not recognize. What is definitely wrong, however, is the pride which incorporates self-satisfaction and denies self-examination.

Ike has been "dead" since he was twenty-one. Roth is right in judging this truth and now, when his "uncle" is old, weak, the vision of the old man's life becomes clear. Life will not be cheated. Man will only cheat himself:

'Maybe so' he (Ike) said. 'But if being what you call alive would have learned me any different, I reckon I'm satisfied, whatever it was I've been'.<sup>93</sup>

Here Faulkner's character reveals his agreement with the attitude that Camus so violently detested. The comment, "I'm satisfied" echoes the French existentialist's words on mordant "self-satisfied virtue". This is the stand of the false saint,

who, in attempting to escape from life's limitations, has merely fallen into the clutches of pride. For any man concerned with humanity, the human predicament, this is the most subtle form of self-destruction. Man can then rationalize anything he does. The tremendously effective power of self-analysis and self-criticism is lost. What should go ahead remains undeveloped. Faulkner shows that this cannot go on forever. Soon reality asserts itself, and the brittle, hollow twig snaps in its hiding place because the wind will not always pass it by.

Ike fears what the challenge of conversion back to a human status will do to his secure, frozen immobility. It is too hard for him to face reality again, to find love and rebirth at eighty years old. But the fear is deeply hidden beneath self-complacency and spiritual self-preservation. Shielded by untruths, he will not allow the slightest amount of doubt to pierce his armour. The return of fluidity, or to a nakedness before truth, would mean a challenge to the life he has led and the purpose and direction of it. Ike has his opportunity now to sacrifice his "truth" for the "Truth" of man's role in the order of existence. By saving Roth from the perils of a satisfied, groundless life, he can also remove his own pernicious self-satisfaction. Between these two stands lies the path and purpose of man's life--the direction between humility and pride, between self-doubt and assurance of the redemption through love.

With the challenge that Roth offers against Ike's belief in the innate goodness of man, the latter finds himself in the

role of one who "denies". The characters are clearly in focus here. Certainly Ike must deny that, without police, man would not behave. Ike will not allow Roth to place the explanation for man's submission to moral codes on the foundation of his fear of castigation or social ostracism. To suggest that man is good only because he curbs himself, is deterred according to selfish motives, is to disagree with Ike's self-satisfied opinion that man can lead a faultless existence and assure himself that he is always right. History has proved that moral probity is not absolute, but relative to situations that man experiences. Ike is so unconsciously settled in his pride that he does not even feel the sting of Roth's insults. It is true that Roth is harsh in seeing the only rationale for morality in man's fear of punishment. But for a young man, full of bitter resentment, there is little to rely upon beyond his own cynicism. Eventually, the "tension (is) broken",<sup>94</sup> revealing that a conflict is momentarily subsiding.

Ike, however, will not give up to silence yet. He says: "I still believe. I see proof everywhere".<sup>95</sup> He must protest his faith strongly or else the walls of his unreality will fall. Meanwhile, Legate repeats the words, "Well I wouldn't say"<sup>96</sup> at two important points in this argument between Roth and Ike about the goodness of man. It seems as if this mediator states it first to the old man, and then to the young one. He "wouldn't say" that either man was justified in his view.

Ike says that there were many deer at one time, "So

much that we (i.e. the hunters) even killed does".<sup>97</sup> Wyatt, a companion-hunter, who, like Roth, has no romantic notions, says: "Some folks still kill does".<sup>98</sup> The three predominating ideas of Faulkner's story are integrated here--the fact that a finality is closing in, that the hunt is now clearly regarded as a "kill" and that does, usually outside and above the code, at times are slaughtered by the brutality of men. This has become a weak world, no longer virile and courageous, no longer a place for self-discovery. Its emotion has become a destructive hysteria, and hence, does, the females who offer love, creation, a half to the half of man, are slaughtered, ruthlessly, without special consideration. This destruction deprives the buck of his mate and reduces the number of future deer. Roth and Ike have the same opportunity--to defend the mistress and her child or to expose them to slaughter of a subtler kind. In the end, the choice for the latter becomes a slaughter of the self. Just as one cancels out the number of future deer by this act, so the other cancels out his chance to hunt for an effective, purposeful existence. It is characteristic of Ike to blindly stress his reliance on the belief that "most men" are above such slaughter.

Wyatt's explanation is less romantic and less optimistic. He recognizes the selfishness in mankind:

'We dont kill does because if we did kill does in a few years there wouldn't even be any bucks left to kill'.<sup>99</sup>

Ike answers:

'According to Roth yonder, that's one thing we wont never have to worry about....He said on the way here this morning that does and fawns--I think he said women and children--are two things this world aint never lacked'.<sup>100</sup>



Faulkner makes it clear just what is at stake here. Ike and Roth are caught up, not only in the isolated idea of a hunt, but in the conflicts and expression of their codes, their faiths and their ideas of love. Roth's view is too unsettled, Ike's too congealed. The old and the new, the dogmatic and the problematic, are involved in a struggle, a mutual tension in making clear the purposes of existence.

In the McCaslin world, women and children are few. The absence of them is the one obvious feature of this family's history. Roth's statement must be interpreted as a bitter, cynical one, whereas Ike's reaction is full of irony, since "does and fawns" have never been a part of his life. Women and children exist outside of the misapplied code of the forest. When Ike says, "'But that ain't all of it,'"<sup>101</sup> one would expect him to elaborate on the role of women and children in man's life. Instead, he provides a very innocent, romantic, yet sterile and superficial image of the kind of life he loves. He sees everything as idyllic, as in harmony with God's laws and wishes:

'That's just the mind's reason a man has to give himself because the heart don't always have time to bother with man thinking up words to fit together. God created man and He created the world for him to live in and I reckon He created the kind of world He would have wanted to live in if He had been a man--a ground to walk on, the big woods, the trees and the water, and the game to live in it'.<sup>102</sup>

Ike expresses this dreamy, dogmatic stand clearly, possibly too clearly, with a blind sense of awe, of perfection. The simple admiration, the appreciation of life is effective, and reveals a grateful soul. But the attitude is also excessively

naive, a concept of existence both narrow and superficial in its complacent evaluation of forest life. Death, destruction, man's inhumanity are overlooked. This other side of life is not mentioned, not merely because Ike is justifying God and the world, but because he is justifying his own existence to man. The childish tone of Ike's statement shows that it is respectful to God, but is also motivated by pride and blind praise of the exterior form of a languishing spirit. It is too neat, too easy to say that man has God on his side and that things would not be as they are unless He wanted them so. This is the essence of inhuman satisfaction, that passive position which allows man not only to accept life as it is, but to twist its shape until it fulfills his desires and then to rationalize the perversion. The sin is a subtle one which merits compassion and understanding, since the pride concealed behind it is often unknown to the person expressing the humility.

Ike's narrative sounds like a fairy tale which has been transmogrified into an egregious sermon. It is a subtle, charmingly effective technique to use simple candid beliefs on the skeptical. But in this case, it does not work, since in relation to the real situation, it is a misrepresentation of the world as an Eden. It is ironic that "this world He would have wanted to live in"<sup>103</sup> is virtually falling apart at the seams. Ike ignores the visible symptoms of this truth which have been present for years. The hero has been betrayed by appearances.

Ike's comments on the "desire to hunt" are also part of

a chimera, incongruent with the world, a dream which he has created for his own consolation and enjoyment:

'And maybe He didn't put the desire to hunt and kill game in man but I reckon He knew it was going to be there, that man was going to teach it to himself, since he wasn't quite God himself yet...'<sup>104</sup>

Ike takes himself seriously here, which makes the matter all the more grotesque and discomfoting. We know that he says these words in a solemn voice, not only because of their relative place in the dialogue, but because he never goes outside of his old man's sonorous tone. Ike has very little sense of humor, and smaller intellectual vitality.

When Wyatt asks: "'When will he be (God)?"<sup>105</sup>, Ike follows through with his characteristic dogmatic response:

'I think that every man and woman, at the instant when it don't even matter whether they marry or not, I think that, whether they marry then or afterward or don't never, at that instant the two of them together were God'.<sup>106</sup>

Once more the idea is out of proportion with the human personality and situation. Man finds love, denies the body, denies the need to consummate this love, to put it into effect. But above all, he is apathetic to the commitments realized in the "bondage" of marriage. Thus he is, in combination with his loved one, what Ike McCaslin calls "God". This denies the purpose of love, the instinctive, natural drives, the mission of desire. Love offers man another half of himself, allows him to share in humanity. But Ike seems to be little concerned with the establishment of a human relationship. By denying the sensual aspect of life, by refusing to consider marriage as important, even after marriage, man becomes a Godhead. We

see the irony of this comment when applied to the context of Ike's personal failure as husband and lover. Possibly Ike has blinded himself so badly that he believes that he once had such an affinity with his own wife. In this case, he has rationalized his failure to meet his wife as a human being as well as his failure to make his marriage strong and meaningful.

Ike and the whole McCaslin clan have been incapable of a complete kind of love, but Ike is really the first to praise himself for it. Edmonds, so human and yet so bitter, is justified in saying that:

'Then there are some Gods in this world I  
wouldn't want to touch, with a damn long  
stick.'107

He recognizes how falsely supernal this assessment of Ike's really is. It is too weak, too flimsy, too ethereal. Roth is looking for something tangible, something meaningful in life and he knows that this is not the answer. He knows that the world has its falsities and deceptions, of which he is very skeptical, and consequently this answer is too chimeric. It presents a grotesque, distasteful picture of man's achievement--an image open to scorn and evil wills. Roth is not afraid to admit that

'...that includes myself, if that's what you  
want to know!'108

In his scorn and suspicion, at least he has the integrity which Ike lacks. He sees the ludicrous nature of this sainthood, is conscious of a disgust which would even extend to himself. Young Edmonds may be cynical, but he understands how such sainthood would destroy man, rather than create him.

Faulkner does not try to escape or tone down the cynicism here. Rather he sees the demand of presenting the dramatic conflict between antithetical forces.

Roth sees then, that Ike's dogma is unreal and inadequate. It fails to provide for the present, for the human demands, but places all its focus on the soul's future. Edmonds can see no joy in this. If this is godly then he does not want to be a god. It is repulsive, disillusioning to a person who is far from satisfied and wise. Roth needs to find freedom and commitment, needs to satisfy his needs that scream from within. Ike's fantasia of eschatology does not allow room for this. Faulkner recognizes man's honesty to himself when the latter states that he does not want to be God. This ambition is something false to our personalities. Even saintliness must remain distant and aloof. To make this achievement simpler and an earthly possibility is foolish, disillusioning. Instead of directing man towards his goal, it brings the goal here.

The eventual acceptance of passivity and a refusal to agree to his commitments are manifested in Ike's own words:

'He (God) put them both here: man, and the game he would follow and kill, foreknowing it. I believe He said: 'So be it.' I reckon He even foreknew the end. But He said, 'I will give him a chance. I will give him warning and foreknowledge too, along with the desire to follow and the power to stay. The woods and fields he ravages and the game he devastates will be the consequence and signature of his crime and guilt, and his punishment.' '109

Ike makes it clear that this is the role of denier. Leave the woods alone and you will be guiltless, will become a god.

Don't touch their sanctity and you will not be punished. Ike remains a priest of hollow forms, not of the heart of the woods' revelations. It is suitable that he should employ the woods and hunting as his metaphor. In effect, he has confused his symbol with the truth behind it.

Faulkner makes it clear that Ike is so tied up with his justice, the past, the values and the life in the woods that he forgets that larger plans do exist and that man is the important thing, not a few bushes. Roth shows that as the human race grows, indeed man will witness more folly, more failure. But the distrust that the young man feels is also based on the fact that no new spiritual foundation has replaced the old, that the modern world, with all its criminals and selfish men, offers no hope to those struggling to find hope and self-understanding. Ike appears to have forgotten that hunting teaches, that it challenges man and gives birth to values, that it can be creative as a quest, not a mere destructive slaughter. Instead, he sees that the destruction of the old way is a crime. Man "ravages" and "devastates". His purpose is to "kill", and he will be punished for this "crime". Here Ike has equated his values with God's, made his stand the only righteous one. He forgets that the forest has its own evil, its own destructive principles, which he once recognized and saluted. In defending the anachronistic wilderness, in cutting modern man off from the source of life, he joins the snake's "pariah-hood" and commits himself exclusively to his own life. He forgets that the forest has been languishing for some time, and that, in guiding men

through it, in joining the kill, in chopping down its woods for lumber, he has not remained apart from the destroyers. Man cannot escape the commitment, but can only overlook his part in it. Faulkner makes it clear once more that the old man suffers from the "hereditary" McCaslin moral schizophrenia. At one time he refuses important decisions, washes his hands of any misdeeds: at others he joins in to get his share of the forests' gifts. In the end, Ike's life is clearly shown as one obsessively focused on self-aggrandizement.

Even at the time when Ike was still a young man, Sam knew that his way of life was living on borrowed time. The transience of his world, the necessity of Old Ben's sacrifice were facts clearly understood by the old seer. What is noble in the life that Fathers has shown him has not been nurtured in Ike for the sake of its transference to others. McCaslin refuses to see himself and the world in a proper perspective. Consequently, his wisdom remains unshared since it becomes his private tool. The rest of the world receives no mercy. Ike righteously condemns it, and, in his typical heartless fashion, says that the destruction of the forest is a judgment on man. Instead of seeing that he has selfishly sacrificed man's chances by keeping his wisdom to himself, he claims that man is suffering from the consequences of his own deeds. The wilderness life, for Ike, is the way blessed by God, since it is his own way. Everyone else has given up their "chance", has failed to heed the "warning", and, hence, must suffer punishment. This is the only conclusion one can draw, when God becomes a heartless tyrant best symbolized by a rule-book.

Ike spoke of man's chances before. In part four of "The Bear", he said "that the white man's chance was about to be replaced by the negro's".<sup>110</sup> Now he has gone one step further. The negro, Ike knew, was white man's slave and did not have his guilt, but was forced into this ignoble and unnatural life. As a young man, full of ideals, Ike looked upon this question in the abstract. He saw that, in giving the negro race freedom, it would, because, of its lack of guilt and its strength, take the chance offered by God. Eventually Ike recognized that the question was not this simple. Negroes, like Fonsiba's husband, refused to submit to righteous indignation. Ike sees that they do not rise up actively, do not demand the maximum out of life, but are satisfied with obtaining their personal freedom. Because they have been subjected so long to bondage, because they live close to the earth, they do not share in Ike's grand ideas but want nothing more than their own free will and personal respect. Now we see that the social context has been replaced by that of a personal-natural one. If the negro proves to be a man with human limitations and follies, Ike and the wilderness will take their chance. The step away from the human predicament, a retreat into the security of the self, is clearly indicated here. Companionship with people who have been socially betrayed is replaced by a companionship with trees and animals.

Ike has little understanding of what freedom and bondage really are. To see the destruction of the forest as the last denial, the unforgivable sin, puts all of life in a ludicrous focus. Is this the Garden of Eden that it merits such treat-



ment? For Ike it is clearly a matter of either/or. Man may use his violent free will against the forest or may cower before it and commit himself to its conservation. It is clear that the distinction cannot be so finely set forth since Ike himself has not really made this choice. Faulkner shows that freedom is not merely snuffed out by what we do or do not do. Action or in-action can only remain symptoms of a disposition--a deeper rejection or acceptance of a stand felt to be justified as a worthwhile human cause.

Ike remains awake in the night "alarmless, empty of fret"<sup>111</sup>

Maybe I came for this, he thought: Not to hunt, but for this. I would come away, even if only to go back home tomorrow.<sup>112</sup>

The "this" referred to here is, most definitely, the escape, the coming away to his unreality. Ike finds peace and meditation in the woods, but the purpose behind them is selfish. The calm provides self-stimulation, an invitation to infatuation with oneself. Self-deception has allowed Ike to enjoy isolation in a cold and dark moribund world. This image is a visual reckoning of the actual state which the old man has achieved. He comes to the forest "not to hunt" but to find the spot where he can remain fixed in his illusions, assured that, with the forest around him, he has done the right thing. It is ironic that the place which first offered an atmosphere and codes to Ike, the setting where he became initiated into human values and understanding of life's meaning, should now become a place of refuge from life, an escape into peaceful delusion. The woods have not really changed as much as Ike

has.

It is certainly ironic that he should run to a dying world for comfort. More ironic than this, however, is his failure to understand that he has been the source of his own destruction as well as a partial source of the extinction of the forests, their game, and, finally, the soul of this wilderness. Ike has watched the forest diminish, its power fade, its hero die, its boundaries narrow. He does not ask the question how far it must go before it is no longer a forest. Nor does he inquire whether there is a reason for the usurpation of the outside world. Instead, he is satisfied to be left alone, since his pride is strong enough to imagine the wilderness as a large, expansive and all-important universe where he is God.

Ike's vision is not one of a man who has been battling for self-awareness and is now prepared to face the trial of death. Instead, he dreams, allowing his mind to recede towards his youth. He derives a selfish pleasure from such reminiscences since he feels that his life has been free from anything false or immoral. Indeed, he develops a fixation with his point of achievement. His youth has been an unusual one, one which offered a sensitive child a chance to lead mankind out of their desert. Instead, there is a lacuna between Ike's youth and old age, a time when nothing happened at all.

Ike reconstructs the first hunt and his initiation into the code of the wilderness through a blood ritual. But now he refuses to see death as a cyclical beginning of a new life:

I slew you; my bearing must not shame your  
quitting life. My conduct forever onward must

become your death.<sup>113</sup>

These words, echoing from the past, show how clearly and nobly Ike realized his mission. Following his sixteenth year, however, he forgets the lesson he has learned and unconsciously begins to slip into the subtle trap of self-satisfaction. It is noble of Ike to see that his conduct "must become (the forest's) death", but he is also meant to be a disciple, a prophet, a Lazarus or Zoroaster come back from witnessing death and isolation to a new life. Ike crosses no borders. The ultimate Moses parallel fails to work out because he does not "go down". He remains on his pinnacle.

Ike fails to preserve the meanings he has learned, since he has refused to plant them in a new testament. His decision is summed up in his negation of this new world's right to exist. In placing all his hopes on a passive and dead world, he goes

against the tamed land, the old wrong and  
shame itself, in repudiation and denial at  
least of the land and the wrong and shame even  
if he couldn't cure the wrong and eradicate  
the shame.<sup>114</sup>

The negative words used here--"shame", "wrong", "repudiation", "denial", "eradicate", "couldn't cure"--show Ike's personal neurosis. He is afraid to involve himself in something positive, but, instead, finds it to his personal advantage to shake his head disdainfully at the empty life around him. It is easy to say that one cannot cure the wrongs of the world and, hence, will remain outside of them. History related a different story about the lives of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, however. He will allow his people to remain enchained by

ignorance.

Ike's final decision is to remain a Pilate figure:

but at least he could repudiate the wrong and shame, at least in principle, and at least the land itself in fact, for his son at least.<sup>115</sup>

The internal misdirection of his "mortal no" is clarified by the fact that Ike has no son. In denying his wife the home she desired, she refused him her body. Now he has no son--only a nephew who is brooding beneath the weight of an estate and its responsibilities, which this young man does not understand. Ike has found security in inflated principles, in rejection, in abstract statement devoid of any relation to real life. The division between dream and reality is revealed, with all its potential irony and tragedy, in the fact that in "saving and freeing his son, (he) lost him".<sup>116</sup>

The pity one must feel for Ike at this point does not erase the fact that he has unwittingly sacrificed a human being to his personal freedom. The child never existed, but could have. Perhaps this son might have been a leader where his father failed. Maybe the world needed this child. But Ike does not stop to think of this. In saving and freeing his child from false and misguided values, Ike has also freed the child from existing. This gap between no-son and son is a valid and direct symptom of Ike's failure.

At one time,

"He owned a house in Jefferson,...where he had had a wife and lived with her and lost her...but, lost her because she loved him".<sup>117</sup>

Again Ike has managed to rationalize a loss in his own favor. But, in this sentence, Faulkner has made it clear that he lost

her "because she loved him". It is ironic that love should be a cause of a loss, unless this love is not returned. Indeed, there was a sacrifice of her love, also, since he failed to share in the marriage as lover and loved. His wife tried to tempt him with her body, tried to use it to obtain what he should have given her. Indeed, her love died. Like Ike's son, she was another sacrifice to principles. Indeed, his name seems ironical. He has sacrificed others, perhaps unwittingly, but has himself made no significant sacrifice.

Still, Faulkner has refused to become the omniscient guide in his story. He allows the facts to be their own verdict. Nor is it this simple--since to go merely by events is to follow a Philistine approach to life. The reader is brought vis-a-vis Ike McCaslin and is expected to treat him and judge him as a man. Besides using decisive condemnation, he is forced to be compassionate towards a man who suffers from personal self-deception. In the sentence concerning Ike's wife, there is no absolute division between Faulkner and McCaslin and their opinions on the matter. It is stated in all its complexity. Certainly Ike has lost and, certainly, his wife has loved him. This is his way of looking at the matter. But we must also recognize the irony, the deception in the statement and share, with Faulkner, an understanding of what lurks behind it.

Hence, as Ike continues, the veneer of words cracks beneath its cloying shine:

"But women hope for so much. They never live too long to still believe that anything within the scope of their passionate wanting is likewise within the range of their passionate hope".118

Ike does not understand women, and hence, is incapable of a mature, efficacious relationship with his wife. He decides that "women hope for so much". Instead of giving his wife faith in life, in "passionate wanting" entering "the range of passionate hope", he tries to change the scope of her existence. He has destroyed her hopes but refuses to consider this. It is ironic that she has hoped for so little, yet he chides her hopes as being impractical and believes that his own have been achieved. Lena Grove,<sup>119</sup> Caddy,<sup>120</sup> Ike's wife-- the women in Faulkner's books who can offer love, do not hope for or demand more than their world or their lover can give them.

Hence, Isaac McCaslin, loveless and unloved, is a lonely old man who has accomplished little:

an old man looked after by blood at least  
related to the blood which he had elected out  
of all the earth to cherish.<sup>121</sup>

This statement reveals a pride in the McCaslin blood lineage. Ike has always had a fear of miscegenation, a fear which he covers up with a noble mask. As a young man, he had discovered that his ancestor had entered into sexual relations with his slaves that even led to incest and suicide. Lucius Quintus had already set money aside each year for the grand-children of the negress involved. Ike carries on this pay-off and makes no advancement at all. He repudiates the sexual role in life and condemns miscegenation because it reminds him of the potential "evil" in mankind. The illicit sexual episodes in his family's past fail to arouse his pity, and he sees them as mere acts of lust, not part of a quest for love. Ike offers

the negroes equality, not because he believes in it, but because he wants to get them off his conscience. He will not be responsible for what his family initiated, but, at the same time, he will not recognize the negro's equality when the time comes to do so. He does not think about the chaos within Roth's soul--the fact that maybe the young man needs the negress in order to make his way in life.

Our final vision of Ike as a mature man moves toward completion. He waits for November to come, the advent of winter chill when he can go out on one of his mock hunting trips to the forest, "his home".<sup>122</sup>

Because it was his land, although he had never owned a foot of it. He had never wanted to... because it belonged to no man. It belonged to all, they had only to use it well, humbly and with pride.<sup>123</sup>

This is the young Ike talking again. "He" is still present in the old man, and Faulkner will not have this point overlooked. Again, the author indicates that Ike is a complex human being, victimized by his unrealized self-betrayal.

Sam, who sought his own end after his struggles to save Old Ben and the forest from humiliation in a world no longer theirs, found that death was the great challenge. Even so, he developed and encouraged a proselyte, a young idealist who could bridge the gap between myth and actuality. Sam realized that what was of essence in the forest would never be possessed or destroyed, because it was beyond the forest itself. But, finally, Ike reveals the narrowness of his own humanity: the fact that he has not accepted the mission, has not understood the relationship between the deaths of Old Ben

and Sam, but has shielded himself from the truth by his armor of pride and his satisfaction with selfish appearances:

Then suddenly he knew why he had never wanted to own any of it, arrest at least that much of what people called progress, measure his longevity at least against that much of its ultimate fate. It was because there was just exactly enough of it. He seemed to see the two of them--himself and the wilderness--as coevals.<sup>124</sup>

This condemnation of progress in favor of a personal, intimate life with the wilderness shows clearly the position Ike has reached. At first, his idealistic sensitive soul abhorred the past of the McCaslin clan, and, consequently he sought an amelioration in "communal anonymity". But, eventually, this anonymous stand offered no equality among men. Instead, it offered Ike a chance to lose his place in the world and escape from life. The desire to repair the damage spread by the family's past turns into a righteous condemnation of his ancestors. Ike also refuses the responsibilities that would come to him if he owned the forest. But he does own it--more than anyone else does, because he holds its spirit prisoner. Hence, he rejects all progress. He must see himself and the forest as coevals, if he is to protect himself from exposing his selfishness. Consequently, he measures his personal longevity against the onslaught of the forest's destruction. And because there was "just exactly enough of it", he will be satisfied. It will live until he dies. He will not concern himself with endurance and immortality except as they relate to his own life. It is enough for him that the forest possesses sufficient area to last his lifetime. In the end, he measures appearances--his own against that of the



wilderness.

It is here, then, that Faulkner allows us to see Ike's ultimate attitude towards the forest. I find it difficult to to interpret it in any other than a direct way. The extent of the selfishness is great. The old man is pleased with himself and the forest since they will live and die together. Ike has no consideration for the rest of mankind. He closes his mind to the evil, the jealousy, frustrations and needs of the life surrounding the puny forest. His decision is to avoid that life, to condemn its cold, mechanistic appearance. He does not recognize that there are many people in this world and that aspirations, ideals and desires exist as strongly as ever within it. The sacrifice of the woods is not of primary importance. The real sacrifice is of Ike's humanity, a purposeless slaughter extinguishing the self for the self. And because of this, there is a sacrifice of others, for, as Faulkner demonstrates, man is not merely an entirety, but exists in a world of men. Truth does not dwindle. It is man who fails.

The fact that Ike finds his own acceptance of his role as hunter and woodsman as a stand received "gladly, humbly, with joy and pride"<sup>125</sup> is not simply conceit, but an honest sentiment which has since been vitiated by self-complacency. In a dreamy state, he reproduces a vision of heaven as a forest with a primitive romantic outlook to accompany it. It is a delusion, however, since it does not make sense that heaven would hold eternal what it allows to fade on earth. Symbols, tropes, myths, become equated to, then indistinct from, reality

for one so romantically deluded. What Ike knew in his sixteenth year is not applied to the remainder of his life. For, as the chilly autumn on the delta reveals, no matter how much more the dream promises, it is static, a false "cold pastoral", preserving love, but not allowing it to be challenged, to fail and succeed.

The facts that lovers will pass, a forest fade, a bear die are not essential in themselves. It is what their truths can accomplish before their departure which is central in Faulkner's story and which allows them to endure. The ability to prevail after they have fallen is their "immortality". Faulkner does not select such ultimate phrasings, but witnesses the achievement of man in a stoical battle for self-discovery. This is the test that Ike faces.

Roth comes to Ike and tells him that a messenger will soon come to whom the old man must say "'No!'"<sup>126</sup> Roth has decided to accept non-being, to give a mortal no to humanity, to love and the grace of possible unselfish creativity of a relationship which will allow him and his lover to "become". Ike has said "No" and now his "nephew" will do the same. This negativity helps to define the true nature of the unreality they seek, a loveless existence on a desert waste somewhere between bondage and freedom. Commitment, the true theme of life, and of Faulkner's stories, is ignored in this small world. Ike's refusal is tragic because he has so much potential, so much to give. Roth's refusal is tragic because he knows the ugly nature of it, yet lacks the courage and wisdom to search for any other answer. He finds himself

constrained by his "hereditary" blindness, a betterness, not self-deluded, but suspicious, afraid, incapable of meeting life half way. It is also the hollowness of an age without valor, compassion but, mostly, without love. It becomes difficult to rise above one's own failure, to move out of chaos in a world so full of it. This is the era "powerless to be born". Before man can recreate himself, Faulkner believes that he must realize the anatomy of the heart, its function, motivation and capabilities.

Meanwhile, Roth has been subjected to misery. He justifiably lashes out at Ike. He is jealous of the past, but fails to blame Ike for not trying to incorporate its values among the new generation. Roth recognizes the immense gap between what he feels and what Ike says. He is both jealous and cynical of the old man's world. But he has no grounds for accusation, no direction towards which he might aim his vituperative phrases. He pushes deeper into nothingness, an endless chain of purposeless little puppet-like movements in a life without sustenance.

Ike asks:

'What did you promise her that you haven't the courage to face her and retract'.<sup>127</sup>

Once more, Roth, brooding, sullen, the last of the sterile McCaslin clan, says, "'Nothing'".<sup>128</sup> When he is gone, the girl appears and Ike, without his characteristic saintly quality, which has vanished at this awkward moment, says:

'You won't jump him here'.<sup>129</sup>

He then offers to carry out Roth's mission, to pay her off with Roth's money, then send her away. Ike, defender of his

family and of his personal righteousness, is nervous before this woman. But the negress knows the limitations of material wealth, and, hence, is justified in saying: "'That's just money'".<sup>130</sup> Certainly the girl has hit a sore spot in Ike's sensitive skin. Once the priest of amelioration, equality and truth, he now seems to be little more than a verbal saint. He has no response to her words when she accuses him of shirking his duty and thrusting it on Roth:

'I would have made a man of him. He's not a man yet. You spoiled him'.<sup>131</sup>

Ike must begin to feel the challenge that she is making on his life and his double values. Ultimately, he must consider the real fact of negro equality and love between man and woman in the same light. Indeed, he must consider the relationship between personal love and love of humanity, since both of these things exist in the girl, not mentally at a distance, but now and in fact. The question is that of freedom and bondage, of the degree to which one will challenge life, and, at the same time, accept its responsibilities. Ike feels the instinctive need to keep away from these tender issues which he has dealt with only abstractly. Now he must face them as realities, as a challenge to his deep-rooted pride. His first impulse is to quickly cover up for himself, to refuse to consider the facts involved and to silence the girl with the money. He must be shrewd, cold and precise if he is to control his thoughts and emotions. He wants to get over this unfortunate incident, which he would like to be able to forget.

But his hysteria quickly catches up with him. He decides to denigrate the girl's life, to scorn her and her morals.

He takes his righteous stand and then attempts to render her truth invalid by insulting her social position:

"You sound like you have been to college even. You sound almost like a Northerner even, not like the draggle-tailed women of these Delta peckerwoods. Yet you meet a man on the street... just because a box of groceries happen to fall out of a boat. And a month later you go off with him and live with him until he got a child on you...."132

Once, he spoke of the innate goodness of man and its power, but now he uses them as a weapon against the girl. If his promise is really carried out, if his words and deeds complement one another, this is the dramatic point at which he must prove it. But even though he has stressed justice, wisdom, the attainment of perfection, the dream, the example of the Nazarene, his is not more than a bottomless life. The girl has hit the flaw in his being with her first challenge, since her life does not need words, does not need to demand anything, but is a gift to man and its own defense:

"She regarded him almost peacefully, with that unwinking and heatless fixity--the dark wide bottomless eyes in the face's dead and toneless pallor which to the old man looked anything but dead, but young and incredibly and even ineradicably alive...."133

Ike defends Roth and, incidentally, himself, by repeating three times that marriage was never offered to her as part of a bargain between her and the young man. The cynical and negative stand is all that he has to cling to. At first he thinks of her merely as a socially inferior creature, one who has given in to lust, possibly for whorish, selfish motives. He refuses to consider the relationship in any other way. In Ike's opinion she must be after something, must be out for

personal gain. But now he discovers that she is a negress, and his reaction towards her becomes even more violent and inhuman:

"... 'Took in washing?' He sprang, still seated even, flinging himself backward onto one arm, awry-haired, glaring. How he understood what it was she had brought into the tent with her... the pale lips, the skin pallid and dead-looking yet not ill, the dark and tragic and foreknowing eyes Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America, he thought. But not now! Not now! He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage, 'You're a nigger!'"<sup>134</sup>

Ike's reference to "a thousand years" might seem like a realist's view of the disheartening racial conditions in the South. And yet Ike has previously shown no aversion to social amelioration, as long as it has not directly affected his own life. Ike is a McCaslin, and yet he tries to oppose his heritage. He refuses to practise the real humility, to search his soul for its limitations, to test his ideas. In blindly opposing his background, society, historical facts, he eventually reaches the point where he is in danger of opposing all that is human.

Ike is not a ghoul. He does feel "amazement" and "pity". Yet his final reaction is one of condemnation, of "outrage", a righteous feeling of shock and a sense of unfairness, which have no foundation if Ike's life is as noble as he claims it to be. One should only feel outrage in the face of great injustice, wrong, very improper deeds and actions. Faulkner's choice of this word implies that a proud soul exists behind Ike's humble words. This disparity between word and reaction is caused by the old man's refusal to fight self-complacency.

After flinging himself about in animal fashion, after outrage, comes the only defense that he can muster in his mind--wait "a thousand or two thousand years".<sup>135</sup>

Ike has only the negative advice, "be patient". The frustration and procrastination which has lasted so long must go on. But Ike has little knowledge of mankind, inasmuch as he is ignorant of his own being. Love cannot wait, since the soul's search must begin in a lifetime, while it can. Full of undiscovered conflicts, too much relying on what he would be, too little the master of what he is, Ike only begins to see the rift which defines the division within himself, the weakness of his response to love's demands.

Ike asks, "Then what do you expect here?"<sup>136</sup> Again he sees her purpose as a greedy one. He challenges her, seems unable to help her, and consequently, cannot help Roth or himself. Now he is too old, too frozen in his ways to find new joy and peace, but falls back rather on hibernation, on hiding in a passive state in the dark woods, enjoying only the memory of the "golden" past. He insists that he can do nothing for the girl.

'Get out of here! I can do nothing for you!  
Cant nobody do nothing for you'.<sup>137</sup>

The last challenge remains unaccepted. Ike avoids his opportunity to use what he has learned. He refuses the role of apostle, the father and servant of mankind whose life is an imitation of the Savior's.

Ike learns no lesson from the tragedy of the past. His predicament is, in a sense, handled with less strength than Carothers used in considering his, even though Ike is not

buying off a negress whom he has used, while his ancestor is. Carothers was honest to the extent that he did not try to hide his cowardice, to gloss over his sin. He admitted in the act of offering a weak substitute, that he could not be a father to a negro child. But Ike, although he also offers only mere money, builds up "outrage" and tries to put all of the blame on the girl.

By forces deep within him, Ike is moved to a final attempt at human consolation. He touches her hand:

He didn't grasp it, he merely touched it--the gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry old man's fingers touching for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back to home.138

Ike is so far from being alive, so far from the world of real flesh and blood, that he can only barely sense what it is like. He is too far gone in his dead illusion to grasp onto, or struggle with, real life. He has suppressed part of his nature and now touches the artery of humanity as a stranger would. He does not know it, fears to trust it, but recognizes it deep in his memory as something held over from a past avatar or as a dreamy "deja vue" experience, a trick played on the conscious mind. Now life, as evoked by the young girl's "smooth young flesh" and "strong blood", confronts the "bone-light bone-dry" unreality in a climactic meeting. Life will not allow itself to remain hidden and suppressed but comes forward and demands that Ike recognize it. However, since he has lost his grasp on it, he only allows himself to briefly touch it, then returns to his isolation.

Faulkner's art reaches beyond a judgment of the old man



here, at a point which is critical in the understanding of Ike's existence. The author evokes an equally strong emotion of pity, which does not contradict the tragedy of the old man's wasted life, but adds a further dimension to it. Ike reaches out, perhaps initially because of a curiosity, an interest in contacting what is so alien to his own existence. It is a difficult thing for him to do, but it is also an act which emanates from an impulse hidden within his deceived heart. Indeed, it is an epiphany, a moment when the past is rediscovered and deception is removed, only to expose life in explicit clarity. The disparity between Ike's world and the world of the young and live is made plain. And with this realization, there is no need for an ultimate decision, a melodramatic reformation or confession, a Gothic death. Faulkner asks if there is not much more to tragedy than death and infinite loss. Endurance bears many moments of tragedy, failure and possible regeneration in the heart of love and the will to prevail.

Ike asks about the child born of the relationship between the girl and Roth:

'It's a boy, I reckon. They usually are, except that one that was its own mother too'.<sup>139</sup>

The geneological history, as shown in Go Down, Moses, presents the McCaslins as a clan of boys and men without women. Negro women have much stronger roles in these men's lives than the white women do. Lucius Quintus' wife never appears in the novel and seems to have little, if any, effect on him. She is never even mentioned in this novel or in any other. Her ineffective relationship with Lucas causes him to seek love

elsewhere. Consequently, he becomes involved with his own negro daughter in an illicit and incestual affair which is complicated further by the fact that it defies color lines. The incestuous act eventually leads to a suicide as well, for when the mother finds out that she and her daughter have had children by the same man, the daughter's father, she does away with herself. The tragic complexity of this story shows how chaos overwhelms order in a loveless life. But Ike will not see that Lucius is both a victim of an unsatisfactory marriage and his own acts of adultery, as well as a fornicator, involved in incest and the cause of a suicide.

Ike's father, Buck, like his twin, Buddy, were confirmed bachelors who lived as hermits and enjoyed only hunting and sporting with other men. Buck finally marries Sophonsiba, only because he cannot escape her clutches. It is ironic that she finally proves to be the better hunter of the two. Sophonsiba does not love Buck, but merely marries him because he is one of the few candidates who can help hold her "plantation" together. Hence she traps her man. Buddy is only a "buddy", a pal to men, not a companion to women. Buck would like to preserve his masculinity intact. His name indicates that he is little more than a stallion who would like to refuse marriage in order to lead a wild, free life among men and animals. Buck and Buddy manage to free their slaves indirectly by giving them the large family mansion and a chance to escape by the back door. The front one is nailed, however, since they must keep up appearances. They take little interest in what the negroes do. Whether this freedom is allowed because of a desire to free the slaves or

to be free of them is never clearly stated, although their reaction towards Tomey's Turl in "Was", the negro child of their own ancestor, is to hunt him down like any other animal. The tone of the story is light, but the message cannot be avoided. Furthermore, the title is in the past and this serves to indicate that the cheerful tone is lost. Ike can admire the small amount of "amelioration" which his father and uncle create in negro-white relationships. Freedom, to him, is something abstract and disassociated from the reality of social conditions. He never examines its nature closely or asks himself if this freedom is altogether beneficial.

Zack and Cass have wives, but they are never introduced into the novel. They are, in the end, only props--means to creating new generations, and although it is not completely fair to say so, it is probable that their husbands think of them in this same way. Their importance is no more than that of child-bearers. In fact, Zack turns to Lucas Beauchamp's wife, a negress, in his time of need. "The Fire in the Hearth" deals with the conflict between the proud Lucas and Zack, his master. Eventually, Molly, the wife, returns to the hearth, the symbol of the home life, where a fire, Lucas' love, continues to burn for her. Zack's relationship with Molly indicates his instability, his need for feminine companionship, a relationship with a woman, even if it must be an ephemeral one. But, in solving his need through another man's woman, he does a false thing and will not meet her on equal terms. She is not his property and, in the end, she is sent back. Molly is Lucas' woman but must go along with Zack's orders.

John M. Muste<sup>140</sup> who has done one of the few studies on the role of love in Go Down, Moses, says:

...Lucas must be extremely courageous to demand the return of his wife and then to try to avenge himself on Zack by entering the latter's house and assaulting him.... Zack is baffled because he neither loves Molly nor comprehends Lucas' love for her. He merely uses Molly because she was handy when his own wife died.<sup>141</sup>

Again it is the negro who knows love and battles for it. Love gives man a dignity which will not be obviated, because it has an order that makes man courageous and audacious before those who would destroy it. No white man is capable of understanding the nameless negro who, in "Pantaloon in Black", insists that he bury his own wife. Everyone takes it for granted that he wants to do this because of his hate for her and his desire to see her in the ground. Faulkner shows that no white man, and, particularly no McCaslin, is capable of recognizing the power of love and the grief caused by the loss of a loved one.

Ike's marriage, the only unproductive one, in the sense that a child is not even born, exists in name only, since, at eighteen, he promised to wed the forest. He is a celibate and devotee of this world. Hence he sacrifices any grounds on which his marriage to his wife might stand and flourish.

Now Roth will say "No" also. It is suitable that his child is another boy, although, in this case, there is a chance that the McCaslin blood might find a new beginning elsewhere under a new name. With Roth and Ike gone, the newborn will blend both negro and white bloods and will be left in the care of a woman with a strong heart. There is, in him, a new

testament, which can possibly flourish where Ike's failed. He is the outcome of a creative instinct, the blossom of love and motherhood, of commitment and acceptance. It is unfortunate that Roth cannot share in what this family has to offer, but Ike does not help him to do so. Perhaps it is best to do without a father when he is bitter and cynical, incapable of facing the social and emotional challenge offered him. And perhaps there has also been too much of the male in the McCaslin world.

Ike gives the girl his horn, saying, "It is his. Take it".<sup>141</sup> Here he offers her son the horn, the symbol to Ike of the old hunt, its glory and courage. The offer brings to a high point the reader's sympathy for Ike, isolated as he is in the world of his dimming ideals, which no one living seems any longer able to share. Because it is valuable to Ike, he assumes that it would mean something to her. The horn has no function any more, no place in the creation of a new life. The old hunt is lost, the old search terminated, and now a new frame of reference, with new values, is needed. Without the courage and strength to sound it, the horn is hollow and useless. Now its sound will no longer call men and their trained animals into an organized hunting party, but will only blast forth its own doom.

It is now somewhat clearer why Faulkner employed the hunt in many of his stories throughout Go Down, Moses. In "Was", Buck and Buddy hunt down the negro, Tomey's Turl, treating him just as if he were any other beast. But in the end, they lose and he wins a wife, Teenie Beauchamp, Sophonsiba's servant girl. Sophonisba wins Buck. "The Old People" is a strange

story of Ike's first deer hunt and the blood ritual which initiates him into his role as man, as student of the wilderness ways, as the heir who accepts the gifts of the ever present "old people" whose souls "haunt" the forest. In the end, he has entered the cycle of their history. "The Bear" and "Delta Autumn", of course, make extensive use of the hunt. In fact, each story in the novel is about some sort of hunt or other, from the hunt of Tomey's Turl in "Was", treated in a light-hearted fashion, to Millie Worsham's search for her grandson, Samuel, in "Go Down, Moses", which ends with his return in a coffin. The quests indicate a journey and a confrontation which are ultimately the way to self-creation and fulfillment in a world full of opposition, violence, selfishness, depravity.

But it is clear that the McCaslins have failed to interpret what the hunt teaches them and bring it into the other areas of their existence. Part of the fault is always man's although part of it is caused by the world's irrevocable reality. The old traditions must inevitably die in order to make way for the new, and nothing can coax or tease them into a continued existence. The forest hunt is the life of the "old people", a lifeless, futile pastime if one would cling to it alone. But the hunt never did promise to last forever, never tried to convince man that it was heaven, an entity possessing everything, a life unto itself. It is a world of rigid values, a world that will not accept cowardice, stupidity, betrayal. Boon Hogganbeck feels the loss, the inadequacy of his life although he cannot interpret or understand it. He

must continue his hysterical, frustrated attempts to possess what can never be his. Furthermore, it is a world of challenges, a place where death looks one in the face, where virtues can be found and a spiritual strength discovered. But there have been and are no women here after all. What should have been a school for Ike becomes a church and, then, a heaven. He will not bend to the destructive forces without or really greet those within. Above all, he will not try to develop the values he has learnt, the values of courage and honesty, and, most important, those of pride and humility, in the living world. Whatever man finds must be carried to his wife and planted in her heart and womb.

We always see McCaslins beginning and ending their lives. There is, in the final analysis, not much difference between the two, for these people have not travelled a yard in comparison with Thoreau's great journey in Walden. The McCaslins fail to locate any core for their lives, any centripetal force which explains a growth from myth to reality and holds them in a steady union. Without this development, there can be no climax to their careers as human beings. Crescendos and dimenuendos--that is all.

The hunt is Ike's particular symbol, the monogram which labels every important thought and deed in his life. It is a McCaslin symbol, as visible in the lives of Buck and Buddy, both here and elsewhere (cf. The Unvanquished, Sartoris). Now it is purposeless and, hence, has a deleterious effect on Roth's life which it also controls. But there are other hunts--that of Lucius Quintus for a fulfillment of life and that of

the Edmonds branch of the family for a meaningful order in the midst of chaos. Cass, Zack and Roth, the three generations of the Edmonds side of the family, are caught up in the labyrinth of possessions, of land-ownership, and hence are quasi-McCaslins. Indeed, they are cousins and have half-McCaslin blood, but it is a woman's--something rare in the McCaslin chronicle. These Edmonds are treated by their relatives as inferiors, as weaklings, as young nephews before the older uncles. Zack even bows before the wishes of a negro, Lucas Beauchamp, and allows himself to be accosted and attacked by this man, his social inferior. Cass is the only one with strength of mind, but, because he cannot accept any of Ike's arguments or refute them, he must give in to his cousin's wishes. Part four of "The Bear" shows the struggle of two consciences which run parallel but never meet. The Edmonds are not conscience-stricken by the fact that they accept land, its traditions and the contradictions and wrongdoings associated with it. Cass does not see why the white man should not be a master and own plantations. Their flaw lies in their weak unpreparedness, their lack of the strength and substance needed to accept a responsibility which is not really theirs. It is never really said whether Cass accomplishes much or little for the plantation. He appears to have had some success, but, unfortunately, builds up a bitter and troubled family. Zack and Roth are unhappy, brooding, cheerless, melancholy. Neither can do anything for negro-white relations, neither is a successful master of the land he owns because neither is capable of doing anything for himself, of being a self-master.



Their lives should adhere more to basic human needs denied them by their way of life. There is no coherence to their existence, no substance, only an endless void throbbing with desire. Their frustrations are expressed overtly, whereas the McCaslins do not understand this caustic cynicism, since they are the successors of Lucius Quintus, the man who failed to find love.

Money (property, possessions) and the horn (hunting, wilderness, courage, totally virile) are feeble offerings and hence Ike comes up with a third, the most ironic of all--advice. Ike is truly playing his weak, pompous, ineffectual role as Polonius:

'That's right. Go back North. Marry a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you--for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find a black man who would see in you what it was you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even still less than that, if it's revenge you want. Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he ever existed'.<sup>142</sup>

Ike, who knows nothing of love, fails to see her reasons, her motives. All he offers her in their place is revenge, a negative soul-destructive thing. It is the height of selfishness imposed on another's being. Ike sees her as a victim of want just as much as he is. Certainly all men have desires, but the girl's are not as autocentric as the old man's are. The whole attempt to give the girl advice is an ugly chimera, because he does not understand what her life means.

The girl sees that this is both a failure for Ike and

Roth, for she could have made a man of the latter and, indeed, of the former, if he had been able to help her. Compassion is part of her love, a giving, and she knows that she has enough to go on, but is not sure about Roth. Ike's words do not have any influence on her strong heart. He can only try to repel her, or try to turn her fight for endurance into something low, unrealistic, even malignant, which should be escaped. He is telling her that her timing is wrong, but his whole life has been an attempt to prove that time is a false control on man. To come back in a thousand years is not to come back at all, and one must find endurance now, in his own way. Time and social climate should have no relevance to a man who is supposed to have surpassed them. Indeed, Ike has not transcended anything, but has been suspended in the cobwebs of his sixteenth year. Revenge is what his wife took, and now he obliquely reveals his knowledge of this and his ignorance of anything more in love. Hence, this is all that he can offer the young Beauchamp girl. She repudiates this inhuman answer because she can say, with Fonsiba, "I'm free."

The girl answers:

'Old man...have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?'<sup>143</sup>

Her question is all the more painful to Ike, since the problem is even worse than she estimates it to be. He has not forgotten, since there has been nothing to remember. He has had no experience of love since it is part of the human bondage, the freedom struggle which Ike has never known. In fearing and resenting humanity, man's imperfections, he has fled his

own human context and has traded love for the false transcendent unreality. Pride does not enter without defeating the heart. The girl has pin-pointed the centre of Ike's problem. At first Ike struggled to withstand the girl's humanity, but he has no answer to this question about love.

"Then she was gone too".<sup>144</sup> The last word indicates that something more has left with her--the chance to know love. Ike's purposeless, and eventually self-intimidating, sainthood, Roth's small hope for love have gone with her. Now Ike trembles and pants as the cold and dark, to which he once fled, which once swaddled his self-satisfaction, prove to be his enemies:

And cold too: he lay shaking faintly and steadily in it (i.e. the tent), rigid save for the shaking.<sup>145</sup>

This is Ike's home, where he no longer rests but where he finds terror in awareness. It is the cold tent with a trembling old man lying rigid in its dark, dank interior, not the house with its hearth, warmth and family love. In the story "Go Down, Moses", Faulkner described the hearth as the place "on which the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity smouldered".<sup>146</sup> But Ike has none of this. The woods, like man, like reality, betrays its own betrayer. Now, of all places, in his forest, fear and discomfort, spiritual desolation attack him with their virulent chill.

Ike must now face the bitterness concealed deeply in himself:

This Delta, he thought. This Delta. This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white

man can own plantations and commute every night  
to Memphis and...white men rent farms and live like  
niggers and niggers crop shares and live like  
animals, where cotton is planted and grows man-  
tall in the very cracks of the sidewalks, and  
usury and mortgage and bankruptcy and measure-  
less wealth, Chinese and African and Aryan and  
Jew, all breed and spawn together until no man  
has time to say which one is which nor cares...  
 ..No wonder the ruined woods I used to know don't  
 cry for retribution! he thought: The people who  
 have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge.147

Faulkner reveals the gradual uncovering of Ike's thoughts which have been hidden for so long behind his false peace. His aversion to miscegenation complicated by his belief in the white man's racial superiority surfaces here. Ike has not escaped the attitude of the Southern land-owner, although he has tried to reject its surface associations. His fear, misunderstanding and negative impressions of love are still with him. The new order is to him absurd in the true sense of the word--purposeless, without harmony. He reveals his misunderstanding of the wilderness which he sees accomplishing a revenge on man. These are the monstrosities Ike has tried to hide. The only revenge is that which hides in his own heart. Life is now orderless, purposeless and man, the vain creature, must achieve little as he is destroyed by his own wrongs. Ike sees each man in his own little compartment, "white men" and "niggers" lost to "usury and mortgage and bankruptcy and measureless wealth", a world of possessions and miscegenation that he despises. Mercy, compassion do not appear here with their salutary powers. The Delta, instead of being a beginning, is seen as an ugly ending, a swamp bordering on chaos, futility and despair. The only hope Ike sees is found in the small area between the new world and the delta. The forest is the only life that he can bear.

It is noteworthy that Legate, the mediator, appears once more at the end of the story. He is not only "legatus", the go-between, but is also will and legacy (Will Legate), a representation of the inheritor who stands between the two poles of Ike's life and Roth's. He sees the truth as lying somewhere between the idealism of one and the cynicism of the other. The inheritance should draw together the best of both worlds, should link the new and old orders. In the end, because the two poles are so violent, they both fail. Roth sees well, but to no depth. His is a "delusion", a "denuded" bitterness without faith. Meanwhile Ike remains in the dark November of his gloomy, shadow-enshrouded tent.

When Legate comes for a knife to skin a slain deer, Ike says:

'Who killed it?....Was it Roth?'<sup>148</sup>

The answer, of course, is yes, since destructiveness is all that is meaningful now in Roth's life. But in asking, "What is it?", Ike begins his initial query into what he has done. He now questions his own futility as hunter, ancestor, priest and fellow man. Now he will inquire into existence. He gets the answer:

'Just a deer, Uncle Ike....Nothing extra'.<sup>149</sup>

But Ike, now alone, knows better:

McCaslin lay back down, the blanket once more drawn to his chin, his crossed hands once more weightless on his breast in the empty tent.  
'It was a doe', he said.<sup>150</sup>

It is not without purpose that Faulkner returns to calling the old man McCaslin instead of Ike or Uncle Ike in these, the last

words about his life. Indeed, he has not outstripped his heritage, but has remained a victim of it. Ironically, because he has failed to go beyond or outside of it in his rejection, he is caught up in the history of his clan, but more important, in its errors, guilts and shortcomings. Instead of remaining a McCaslin, becoming a father, a leader, a fulfilled man, he has worked the other way around. Now he is left with the realization that he is nowhere. The negative, unreal life effects no amelioration, finds no aspirations or comprehension. Ike has done no more than Buck and Buddy for the advancement of human virtues and understanding.

It is difficult not to seal off the arguments with a final judgement in favor of or against Ike. But, in being true to Faulkner's art and its humanistic values, it must be said that the author leaves Ike with the knowledge that a doe has been killed, that another heart has been suppressed, another love annihilated. This has nothing to do with the butchering of an animal or its sex. Ike does not know what Roth has, in actuality, killed, but he knows now that the two McCaslins have shared in a destruction of love. The chilliness, the weary age of the old man which comes on now much stronger than ever before, the betrayed and the betraying peace, the trembling and the emptiness within, are enough to indicate a realization on Ike's part. What effects derive from this, the extent of the illumination, the salvation or damning of a soul remain "extra muros". These are not the novelist's concern. But, more important, they must remain outside of the humanist's judgement. Failure, inhumanity are immediate things for mankind and can only go beyond

this when the soul faces its choice--annihilation or salvation. Metaphysics has no place here. Faulkner shows that "becoming" is everything and that endurance comes to the most unlikely soul. Nancy,<sup>151</sup> the whore-saint, is an instance of this. Dilsey,<sup>152</sup> no more than a negro servant to one kind of eye, is able to see the beginning and the end. No matter what one knows of Ike, one must not underrate his self-deception, his potentiality, his misery and his final risk. At the same time, the realization comes near after a gathering of all of Ike's flaws and monstrous wrongs which boil in his narrow heart.

In righteously condemning wrongs, man has also to exercise mercy for limitations, prejudices and vanities if he expects to receive it in return. It is as man among men that he creates his outlook and, finally, all judgements must bend to face the judge. He must not go beyond this. Otherwise he has not learned the lesson of humanity presented here.

Faulkner once said that he wanted one thing out of life--to have men say that "Kilroy" was here. But certainly Kilroy would want people to know why he was here also. It is in humanity's hands to betray or represent his integrity. The most frustrating thing for many authors is to see their works misrepresented, to see their own ideas confused with those of their characters. Although this might have bothered Faulkner at one time or another, I can only conclude that, in the end, he must have had many private chuckles about it, for this reaction proves that his analysis of mankind is real and true. Man is full of contradictions, of antinomies. Two people see the same thing precisely the opposite way. In one instance, we lean

one way, but then, suddenly, we lean the other. And in doing so, we are not betraying ourselves, but proving what we are and living according to this proof. The recognition of this gives life its greatest dimension. Behind our contradictions and limitations must be love, purpose and a desire to challenge for endurance. In this way, man gives a purpose to his self-contradiction.

The argument I have presented here leans heavily on proving the existence of one aspect of Ike McCaslin's character and defining the nature of this aspect. My purpose has been to show the irony and tragedy which Faulkner develops and employs in exposing his critical attitude toward certain parts of Ike's life. It has been a much neglected approach. The heroic interpretation distorts the true meaning of Faulkner's stories; at the same time, it is too easy to take all of the negative things, bunch them together and then conclude that the author is a "cosmic pessimist"<sup>153</sup>. My attempt is not to deny the positive, but to prove that the negative exists as well. The only refutations that I have to make are caused by an overexaggeration of the heroic, which misinterprets things in a sense that is altogether too monolithic. Where an evaluation distorts the negations and tries to make them positive I would step in and try to clarify the point as I believe Faulkner would see it.

David H. Stewart,<sup>154</sup> who has done one of the studies of Ike that I feel approaches fairness, says:

"To conclude with the assertion that Faulkner is echoing Yeats' famous lines in "The Second Coming" would be attractive but unjustified:



"The best lack of all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity". 155

It would be nice to see Ike as the former, Roth as the latter, because there is so much truth in it. But who is to define "best" and "worst"? Faulkner's evaluations must be presented as they come to us. As a description of human beings in the world, Yeats' lines approach accuracy in an estimation of Roth and Ike. But we cannot carry things any farther. Mr. Stewart goes on to say:

"By refusing to decide the issue, by declining Yeats' aristocratic solution, Faulkner induces a condition of paralysis and in this way perpetuates the status quo. It is his frenzied meditations that many critics have mistaken for actual commitment, negative or positive, when in fact Mr. Faulkner provides little more than consolation for the suspended intellect". 156

Faulkner's novels are "his frenzied meditations", but they are now ours as well. The greatness of his fiction will rise or fall on how well he portrays the "status quo" and how well man recognizes its importance. Today honesty is such an important virtue, that much of art portrays a fragmented, frightening and, to many, an unacceptable world. Camus, in his Myth of Sisyphus,<sup>157</sup> sees that living an absurd life gives us a freedom which can only exist if we accept the paradox of life honestly. The limitations of reason and the desire to go beyond it must exist in a tension. The over-estimation of either side, too much reason or too much metaphysics, betrays our stand on the narrow ledge of life. One cannot imagine a greater challenge than this. The question one asks and which, for now, remains unanswerable, is how long man can go on with this without falling or fleeing to security. In a most important sense, this is the ability to prevail that is so central

for Faulkner. If he provides no more than "consolation for the suspended intellect", he provides intense stimulation for the mind that searches within and for the heart that feels its truth. If this is recognized, the future can take care of itself. How Faulkner's art is evaluated, how clearly and interestingly he speaks to tomorrow is the question to be answered then. But, apart from, and often because of, its rhetoric, confusions, challenges and paradoxes, it speaks of the "status quo" which is important today and will be important as long as man pushes himself towards self-realization.

# FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Gold, William Faulkner, A Study in Humanism,  
From Metaphor to Discourse, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>William Faulkner, "Speech of Acceptance upon the Award  
of the Nobel Prize for Literature", Bear, Man and God, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>6</sup>William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury.

<sup>7</sup>William Faulkner, "Speech of Acceptance upon the Award  
of the Nobel Prize for Literature", Bear, Man and God, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 171.
- <sup>21</sup>William Faulkner, "The Bear", Go Down, Moses, p. 191.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 191.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 191.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 193.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 193.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 193.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 194.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 194.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 203.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 206.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 208.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 209.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 209.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 226.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 210.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 215.
- <sup>37</sup>Thomas Stearns Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", Collected Poems, 1909-1962, p. 15.
- <sup>38</sup>William Faulkner, "The Bear", p. 215.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 226.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 230.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 227.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 240.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 254.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 254.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 258.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 318.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 320.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 326.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 327.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 327.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 328.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 328.
- <sup>54</sup>Walt Whitman, "A Song for Myself", Leaves of Grass.
- <sup>55</sup>William Faulkner, "The Bear", p. 329.
- <sup>56</sup>Wystan Hugh Auden, "Petition", ll. 2 & 6, Modern Poetry  
vol. VII, p. 182.
- <sup>57</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, The Picaresque Saint: Representative  
Figures in Contemporary Fiction.
- <sup>58</sup>William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun.
- <sup>59</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, op. cit., p. 33.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-105.
- <sup>61</sup>William Faulkner, "Delta Autumn",  
Go Down, Moses, p. 335.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 336.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 336.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 337.
- <sup>66</sup>William Faulkner, "Delta Autumn", p. 337.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 337.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 337.
- <sup>69</sup>William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury.
- <sup>70</sup>William Faulkner, "Delta Autumn", p. 338.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 338.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 338.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 338.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 339.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 340.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 341.
- <sup>77</sup>"The Bear"., pp. 318-319.
- <sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 320.
- <sup>79</sup>"Delta Autumn", p. 341.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 341.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 341.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 342.
- <sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 342.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 342.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 344.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 343.
- <sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 343.
- <sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 343.
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 345.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 345.
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 345.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp. 345-346.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., pp. 347-348.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., pp. 351-352.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

- <sup>119</sup>Light in August.
- <sup>120</sup>William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury.
- <sup>121</sup>"Delta Autumn", p. 352.
- <sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 351.
- <sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp. 353-354.
- <sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 354.
- <sup>125</sup>Ibid., p. 354.
- <sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 355.
- <sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 356.
- <sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 356.
- <sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 357.
- <sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 358.
- <sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 360.
- <sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 360.
- <sup>133</sup>Ibid., pp. 359-361.
- <sup>134</sup>Ibid., pp. 360-361.
- <sup>135</sup>Ibid., p. 361.
- <sup>136</sup>Ibid., p. 361.
- <sup>137</sup>Ibid., p. 361.
- <sup>138</sup>Ibid., p. 362.
- <sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 362.
- <sup>140</sup>John M. Muste, "The Failure of Love in Go Down, Moses",  
Modern Fiction Studies.
- <sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 370.
- <sup>142</sup>"Delta Autumn", p. 363.
- <sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 363.
- <sup>144</sup>Ibid., p. 363. (*Italics mine*)
- <sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 364.



- 146 "Go Down, Moses", p. 380.
- 147 "Delta Autumn", p. 364.
- 148 Ibid., p. 364.
- 149 Ibid., pp. 364-365.
- 150 Ibid., p. 365.
- 151 William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun.
- 152 William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury.
- 153 Campbell, Harry Modean and Ruel E. Foster, William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal.
- 154 David H. Stewart, "The Purpose of Faulkner's Ike", Bear, Man and God, pp. 327-336.
- 155 Ibid., p. 336.
- 156 Ibid., p. 336.
- 157 Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus.

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