Part One

The Pilgrimage of Being

THE USES OF MYTH

Standing in the present, we have been taught to look with somewhat haughty indulgence upon all the past, "primitive" cultures that flourished within their comforting and accommodating myths. Those myths appear to us as the ruins of ancient fortresses erected against the ever-threatening invasion of manifold reality or as crumbling towers of communication thrust upward toward heaven. We reluctant, proud moderns may begrudgingly admit that the societies of the past evidence a simpler, happier, more innocent world, the loss of which gives validity to man's contemporary existential anguish; yet one who would brashly seek to revive myth today, or suggest the "need" for (not so much as the existence of) a modern myth, risks being scorned as a borrower of convenient fictions or as a romantic dreamer. The relentless onrush of time, virtually hypostatized by idealistic philosophy (even against its will), has breached the fortress walls with waves of phenomenal plentitude and brought down the tower with disharmonious blasts from the trumpets of absurdity. In all, however, myth has shown remarkable resilience. It endures not merely as curious narratives labeled and filed by the scholar, but with persistent vitality in culture and culture's guardian spokesman, literature. Myth has proved impervious to man's intellect and has only recently revealed its richest resources in the deep unconscious levels of man's being. Here it gains indisputable victory over time, not by denying it but by making it meaningful.

The rediscovery of myth has occasioned something like apocalyptic enthusiasm, although this rediscovery is, in truth, an illusion covering a newly expanded understanding of human cognition, which is at once simpler and more complex than we
Friday's Footprint

had dreamed. Moreover, despite the various disciplines that now claim to have myth under close scrutiny, only the slenderest threads of accord foreshadow a general agreement. Thus in this first essay I will somewhat boldly anticipate what exists only in potentia, yet I do not hope to offer a definition of myth. From the anthropologists, historians, linguists, literary critics, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and theologians I will draw insights about myth in order to discuss its "uses" in literature. Through this process a better understanding of myth may evolve, but the focus of my essay will remain on the problems of literary interpretation. My method, then, describes a lopsided circle: on the basis of a few preliminary assumptions about the general nature of myth I will examine its specific uses in William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses; in turn, the specific uses will no doubt help refine the original assumptions. But at this point the trajectory of my discussion will divert toward generalizations about the essential structure and language of literature; and, as a curious by-product, it will raise for us the most problematical aspect of modern literary theory: the determination of literature's socio-historical involvement.

To focus on literature's uses of myth indicates no cavalier disregard for the latter's broader cultural dimensions. Indeed, I am anxious not to overshadow such "functions," although this is frequently the result of myth-oriented literary criticism. For example, Northrop Frye's very successful Anatomy of Criticism eventuates in a peculiar, aestheticized version of myth; the myth that Frye speaks of is wholly literary despite his struggles to give it a socio-historical respectability. It is better, though I confess more clumsy, to keep literature and myth at least at an arm's length from one another. The illuminating studies of myth by contemporary ethnographers, myths very unlike the traditional literary versions we have come to know through the history of western art, may yield an even more significant "myth criticism," but not if we continue to see them in the same light that we view, to cite only the most familiar instance, the marvelous myth stories of our ancient Greek ancestors. Myth criticism must break free of the "allusionist" domination; the literary use of myth does not simply convey the idea of an author's esotericism. Such an approach confuses the relationship between myth and
literature because allusions are almost always to other literary uses of myth rather than to myths themselves. Only slightly less objectionable is the idea that literature takes narrative fragments of myth stories to use as plot structures. The theory of “displaced” myth,² like allusionism, implies a recognition theory of literature; the critic’s task is to expose the writer’s half-clad borrowings to a near-sighted and ignorant audience.³

At best, allusion and displacement are only partial explanations. The assumption supporting both is that complete, preformed myth structures exist in order to be alluded to or displaced, but it is difficult to establish the “objective” reality (either cultural or psychological) of any myth. In the broadest sense, a myth is no more and no less than the expression of a cognitive strategy that defines man’s sense of belonging to his world. “Expression” here, however, is an inclusive term ranging from elaborate and aesthetically oriented narratives of highly acculturated societies to simple pragmatic actions asserted through patterns of culturally organized behavior. A myth, therefore, is not so much a “thing” as a psychosocial process; it is not a collection of old stories but a cognitive system that fades into the vague outlines of general culture. As Claude Lévi-Strauss argues, “there is always something left unfinished. Myths, like rites are ‘in-terminable.’”⁴ Thus, what a literary work alludes to is at least partly an unreal construct in the critic’s mind; what is displaced is no more than the “literary tradition” as defined by T. S. Eliot and transformed into “myth” by Frye.

This aspect of allusionism and displacement is in itself instructive. A myth in the broad sense need not be written down and preserved in the cultural archives of human history. There is, to be sure, no better way to establish the death of a myth than by finding it indexed in an encyclopedia and shelved in one of our vast libraries of knowledge. Myths belong to societies and not to individuals. They are unconscious systems of thought and not “beliefs” in the form of dramatic manifestations. Myth is not synonymous with religion.⁵ The function of myth is to organize material phenomena and to structure human behavior. For an observer to become aware of a myth as myth very likely betokens the cessation of that myth’s cognitive functioning for that observer, and this defines roughly a distinction between the user and the analyzer of myths. For the latter we might substitute the
more traditional term interpreter; but in a very real way the user of myths also interprets, although his deeper and more basic activity is best labeled understanding. The task of analysis is to identify and describe a myth structure; yet because the myth has no "real" existence prior to the analysis, the analyzer must do more than merely describe. He must bring the myth into being; he "objectifies" it over against the messy empirical background of its general culture. To do so precludes immediate interest in any particular uses of myth, for he has moved on to what we might call, following the trend of recent philosophical jargon, the level of "meta-interpretation." On the other hand, borrowing terminology from Wittgenstein, the uses of myth can be "shown" but not "said": one can "experience" the force, function, and energy of myth only if it has not been objectified. Once its energy has been "conserved" in a self-regulating, whole, and "visible" structure, one can only "know" the myth in its density as object. The analyst/interpreter of myths is confronted by a "principle of indeterminacy" equally as confounding as that faced by the modern physicist in quantum theory. Nevertheless, the use of myth lies in the dynamic nature of its cognitive functioning, and myths are used when, as Lévi-Strauss says, they "operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact."

The division of myth into "functional" and "objective" structures is, of course, a mere device for the purposes of my explication. Nonetheless, it enables me to discuss a peculiar aspect of the underlying cognitive potential of any myth. The structuring "power" that operates unconsciously in men's minds has an explanatory force that exceeds the empirical limitations of any user. That is, the structuring capacity, which is necessarily whole and adequate, cannot be exhausted in the life span of any one man or in the duration of the collective social group. It is this potential that transcends individual and race and can be abstracted into a roughly adequate structural model by the analyzer of myths. To use the familiar linguistic analogy, the finite structure or system of grammatical rules is capable of generating an infinite number of individual utterances, more than any individual or group could possibly formulate in their day-to-day speaking to specific occasions or experiences. There is, therefore, a "surplus" of explanatory power built into the system,
the "ghost" of perfect knowledge that leaves its lingering "trace" in every specific use of the system. But this powerful structure is only "potential" in any individual culture or any single member of a culture; it is "real" only in the analyzer's objectification. On the empirical level we find that particular experience comes fragmented, momentary, and infinitely plentiful, defying the totalizing powers of this incipiently synchronic system with the diachronic nature of discrete experience. If there is a surplus of explanatory power in the system, there is also a surplus of experience to which the system may be accommodated. The analyzer who abstracts the synchronic structure in order to penetrate to the source of man's potential for knowing and, hence, reach the very ground of what Dilthey long ago called "intersubjectivity" must bracket the empirical dimension of his studies, yet in so doing the myth he identifies becomes a "fundamental form of inauthenticity."

The analyzer engages willfully in an act of "bad faith" in order to objectify a cognitive system; it is never a wholly satisfactory movement, for the vitality of the experiential manifold, which brings the unconscious forward into conscious activity, defies abstraction. Moreover, we know the logical possibility or "necessity" of such a system of surplus explanatory power, its existence as "Cartesian mind," only in its particular manifestations. The reality of the system is revealed in a sense of "absence," as a system always with inadequate content that pushes man toward the experiential world, forces him to speak the system to the plentiful, and truly surplus, particularity. Both system and discrete experience, form and content, are sterile and meaningless in themselves. Each shows a fundamental lack that needs completion in the other. It is true, as Lévi-Strauss says, that man is more possessed by his structuring myths than he possesses them, but so too is he possessed by experience. The key to any myth, then, is in its uses, in its confrontation with the world of surplus content, in its assertion of man's Heideggerian "being-in-the-world." It is a twofold action designed to exhaust both system and experience, to achieve a perfect equilibrium between inner and outer worlds, but because each is an infinity of surplus this is a never-ending quest.

The analyzer of myths, therefore, must first "understand" them as a user before he can interpret and describe them.
interpreter must penetrate to the deepest and most profound levels of the myth where he experiences its cognitive force, where he "thinks" it not as abstract or propositional but in its specificity, with direction and active purpose toward the empirical world. Ironically, here he becomes a part of the very system he is to analyze, but only in this way can he "intuit" the "rich and rewarding" nature of myth. This intuitive level of interpretation involving the use of myth concerns me directly in this chapter. It is only at the level of understanding that one comes near the native user's unconscious, natural thinking, and it is this understanding that defines the literary use of myth.

For the ethnologist, understanding demands field work; he must live within the culture he studies where the day-to-day manifestations of myth in the thoughts and actions of the members of the culture are not merely observed but are to some degree open to participation. As imperfect as this living the culture may be, it is indispensable, for only at this level can one see myth thinking itself to (it does not think about) experience in the gestures and words of the natives. The ethnologist must find myth on both the sacred and profane levels of society. Yet one particular manifestation of myth has a special value; myths "told" or "sung" by an official singer of myths have a privileged position in culture. The singer is not an analyzer but his act of singing raises the myth out of the diffuseness of general society; the energy of normal, daily functioning is transformed into the gestures and words of singing. The official act of singing, however, does not sever the myth from culture; on the contrary, it reinforces the cultural basis of the myth through the dynamics of its psychosocial process. The singing of a myth asserts the individuality of the singer who, nevertheless, works only within the collective sanction. The individual voice of the singer of myths involves the hearers in the very form and activity of his performance, yet the willingness of the audience to be involved is tantamount to the granting of permission for the singer to sing, the making of a contract. If the analyzer's myth, as objectified structure, represents a meta-interpretive dimension, a general code that is, according to Le'vi-Strauss, "anonymous," nonfunctional, even contentless, the myth articulated by an official singer is open to subjectivity, privileged functionality, and the full range of the culture's experiential content. It is somehow
more than the private, daily, unconscious operations of myth in each individual member of the society, but it is less than the abstract, anonymous myth of the analyzer. Its privileged function is to reinforce the hearers' sense of "belonging" to the group, and it is filled with the familiar, immediate, experiential content of the singer's and hearers' world.

The articulated myth, existing between the purely functional reality of ordered material phenomena and the anonymous structure of the analyzer's abstractions, creates an ideal mental space in which the singer and hearers dwell. It is here that the surplus of explanatory power in the structure and the surplus of empirical content play a crucial role. Neither sacred nor profane, this ideal mental space reveals a trace of the whole, self-regulating system, the ghost of perfect knowledge and order, while it grounds its expression in the concrete, immediate, familiar experiential plenitude. This myth, which exists only in the act of articulation, is, nonetheless, more than mere momentary experience, for it implies membership in an enduring community. The singer creates, then, what Heidegger calls "world," a dynamic space wherein he and his audience dwell by virtue of his act of articulation.

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it merely an imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The world worlds, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen.

... By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits.

The articulated myth shows a more radical form of mythical thinking than that represented by the structuralist studies of Lévi-Strauss. Beneath the collective system, "belonging" implies the existence of an individual "ego" who belongs; the act of singing a myth, in order to function as a reinforcement of the individual's awareness "of his roots in society," must also make him aware of himself as member.

In this creation of world, or an ideal mental space, we glimpse what Ernst Cassirer calls the rudimentary symbolic level of
mythical thought. He too describes the symbol as combining raw sense experience and abstract formal totalities in such a way as to be reducible to neither. "It is only in these activities as a whole that mankind constitutes itself in accordance with its ideal concept and concrete historical existence; it is only in these activities as a whole that is effected that progressive differentiation of 'subject' and 'object,' 'I' and 'world,' through which consciousness issues from its stupor, its captivity in mere material existence, in sensory impression, and affectivity, and becomes a spiritual consciousness."24 This fundamental basis of mythical thought and mythical consciousness defines the subjectivity of the myth singer, yet it allows him to create a world wherein he and all individual members of the society, with their own individual identities, may truly belong. This is not, then, the agonizing self-consciousness of modern existentialist philosophy, but it is the emergence of personal identity in what might be called, with acknowledged paradox, a "collective individuality."25

We know too little about the sanctioning of myth singing in most societies, ancient or contemporary, to do more than speculate about its limits and purposes. Some cultures do not seem to encourage such activity, and much of the material of "sung" myths has come to us either in written, literary form or in abstract accounts of ritual ceremonies. It is clear, however, that the singer's subjective role is important and that there is a significant "provincialism" in sung myths that consists of both an emphasis on specific local detail and in the suggestion of broader limits to social belonging.26 It seems a necessary component of articulated myths that they be localized, given a familiar ground against which is raised the somewhat unfamiliar but embracing ideal mental space.

Herein the privileged articulation provides an obvious and instructive analogy to the literary use of myth. The singer of a myth must concern himself with the aesthetic problems of language, form, and execution (performance), but he must do so within the psychosocial and historical limits placed on him by his subject matter and the "occasion" for articulation.27 This latter factor is both helpful and a hindrance; the occasion is generally "given" to him by the homogeneous situation of his singing. His audience is already familiar with the language, tradition, locale, and cognitive system, but because this is so they function not
merely as passive receivers but as active and critical participants in the performance. The product of this given occasion is the strong provincialism of mythic thought—a provincialism that is not a matter only of shared geographic and historical details, of familiar facts, themes, and actions, but is more broadly experiential in that singer and audience share a system of mental constructs, a "local system . . . of significant choices," that organizes mere familiar material phenomena and social behavior into ideal mental spaces, into what finally must be seen as an ideological context that does not so much determine individual thinking as it delimits the field of discursive possibilities.

The literary use of myth is similar in that it involves the individual "voice" of a writer who would articulate a myth or cognitive system to particular, familiar experience; yet the writer cannot assume the "givenness" of his occasion for articulation, and he must struggle against the limitations of his written language, which lacks the experiential immediacy of oral speech. He must create or recreate the occasion within which the myth as a "system of significant choices" can speak to appropriate material phenomena, and he may utilize any number of verbal devices, the creation of metaphoric or poetic forms, to give the illusion of oral singing. The literary use of myth, therefore, is situationally, though not functionally, different from the "natural" or cultural use of myth.

The response of writers to the need for a created occasion varies widely; in the specific example of this chapter Faulkner brings forth, out of his own "real" experience, a fictional, homogeneous culture within which he works in almost all of his individual performances. He provides his readers with the "province" of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, but the province is not under the same constraints as the individual performance (work). This occasion for articulation is no more than a necessary assumption of homogeneity and familiarity. The reader unfamiliar with Faulkner's total corpus is sometimes frustrated, but the province manifests itself in the "attitude" the writer takes toward details and fragments of experience that, without proof or demonstration, he simply treats as a loosely woven fabric of background. These fragments remain loose and unarticulated until the work is raised into the foreground against them. Yoknapatawpha County, like the given occasion of the
myth singer, remains an endless possibility, an infinite manifold
of potential discrete experiences, taking on meaning when raised
into the ideal mental space of the created work.

One very significant constraint placed on the native myth
singer arises from the narrow sanctions of his given occasion.
His intuitive understanding of both tradition and local detail will
be strictly measured by his audience, and a failure of understand­
ing would result in an improper use of myth, what we might
generally term "failed interpretation." More than mere inaccuracy
of detail, such failure is, in effect, improper thinking and
results in either the failure to create an experientially viable and,
hence, embracing ideal mental space or in a revolutionary
cultural expression; it results in nonsense or new ideas. For the
literary user of myths the problem is at least partly (but only
partly) aesthetic, since the province or occasion is also created.
The literary artist will not be judged only by fellow tribesmen on
the basis of a singer/hearer homogeneity (although he will in part
be so judged), but rather by his heterogeneous audience accord­
ing to how convincingly he gives the necessary details of occasion.
The materials of this created province, the sense of time and
place, which circumscribes but is not circumscribed by the work,
has traditionally been treated as irrelevant detail, local color, or
texture. It is, of course, not at all irrelevant and can be seen as
such only by critics who focus on abstract structure or theme as
the "soul" of the work. The necessary and given provincialism of
the myth singer's performance must, for the writer, be removed
one step from his "real" world. The experiential detail of the
writer's world enters into the fabric of his created occasion and is
thereby realized for the reader. The action gives the artist
aesthetic control over it, but no less an obligation to understand
it as the most basic ground of his act of articulation. Unable to
assume the familiarity of his audience with this detail, he must
first selectively, and hence aesthetically, make it familiar, then
raise out of this familiarized detail the unfamiliar but embracing
ideal mental space.

In a novel like Go Down, Moses, however, it is not enough to
say that characters misunderstand one another or themselves or
their situations; rather, the complex structure of failed and
successful interpretations involves the reader directly and creates
the novel's powerful affective dimension. The reader learns the
characters' limitations in regard to their fictive worlds only by coming to terms with the process of understanding and interpreting that enables him, as reader, to achieve a sense of belonging in his own real world. Through participation in the order of language created by the author's articulation, the reader experiences the basic human struggle to stabilize his own, always tentative, being. The world of the novel is what Susanne Langer called "virtual" space and time; therein we experience Faulkner's "vision" of his world as we live in his articulated version of that world. It is a continuous and profoundly historical struggle that brings the affective and expressive dimensions of art into a true communion. The author invites his readers into his world not simply to see "what" he saw but to experience "as" he experienced. The provincialism of the artist's articulation transports the reader to another place and time not in the fragments and details of material phenomena "pictured" for him but in the vision in which the reader dwells through his intuitive or sympathetic understanding. No single work, moreover, exhausts the experiential possibilities of the author's or reader's real worlds. Thus we find authors continuing to write, each work calling forth a new vision and building a "collectivity" of works. Beyond the corpus of any single writer there is an even looser composite of works that form the collectivity of a general literary tradition.

New articulations arise, transforms occur as a result of man's driving need to speak his myths to the endless variety of experience. The tradition composed of these efforts is neither linear nor homogeneous; it is a conglomerate of fits and starts. The goal, unconscious but fundamental, is to exhaust the surplus of experience, to fill the surplus of structuring potential with infinite content and achieve therein a oneness with the world that precludes the need for ideal mental spaces or virtual symbolic orders. It is this oneness that Frye proclaims "the total dream of man"; but because it remains a dream the tradition is never closed. Man's "pilgrimage of being" is an endless quest for the future perfect, the "I will have been" that is stronger than "I will be" (the always unattained), weaker than "I am" (the always illusory and fleeting), and more hopeful than "I was." Human history is the record of this struggle, filled with great moments where it seemed, but only for a moment, that the dream had been
realized and the "I am" fixed. Dispersed in this history, part of it but not fully symbolic of it, the greatest works of our literary tradition stand forth as privileged monuments, articulated out of their own time, enabling us to return to the ideal mental space spoken on an occasion at another hour in another land. These monuments are, perhaps, the only still vital expressions of man's agonizing pilgrimage.

BELONGING AS TYPICAL: SAM FATHERS

As much as any of Faulkner's works, his short story "The Bear" has attracted almost universal critical acclaim. It has been frequently and revealingly interpreted, yet one structural peculiarity has never been fully explained: what is the relation of the long fourth section to the other, chronologically arranged parts that narrate the hunt for old Ben? Perhaps the answer lies hidden in Faulkner's remark that the fourth section belongs to the novel, Go Down, Moses, as a whole; thus, instead of trying to integrate this obviously different section into the traditional narrative of adventure, we might emphasize its contrast with that narrative. Considerations of "The Bear" in its larger form apart from the whole novel have resulted in partial explanations. The relationship of section four to the rest of the story has been said to be mediated by the character of Isaac McCaslin, who learns of his family heritage in the fourth section and who is the self-conscious hero of the hunt sequences. In an allegorical interpretation that follows this emphasis on character, section four is seen as depicting a fallen world tainted by original sin and in conflict with the innocent world of the forest and the hunt. Still further, the world of part four, viewed sociohistorically, describes an economy where blacks are dominated and exploited by whites while the Edenic world of the hunt denies such social hierarchies. All of these observations are true to some extent, but instead of explaining away the difference they clearly emphasize it.

We must begin with the assumption that the insertion of section four marks a break that signifies a necessary difference, a structural and thematic juxtaposition of different, though not simply opposed, elements of the complete novel. On further investigation we will also find that the elements so juxtaposed are not merely stories or moral lessons; they are disjunctive cognitive
systems, one clearly mythic and the other (initially historical) aspiring to the condition of myth, perhaps in a form we can legitimately call "anti-myth." There is a tension between these two systems; but there is also a structural congruence in their manifestations, and on the basis of this complex relationship Faulkner is able to comment on the limits of human understanding and action. He posits on the one hand the extreme of fragmented and discontinuous experience and on the other hand the extreme of order, wholeness, and continuity. This is not to suggest that in Go Down, Moses he creates a modern myth. Rather in his use of myth he tests its integrity and durability, while at the same time he asserts the viability of history as a mode of thought, not unlike myth, born of the interplay of collective and individual consciousness.

The most obvious mythical dimensions of "The Bear" concern the hunt for old Ben. Traditionally this is characterized as a primitive nature myth (a sloppy and inaccurate designation) or as a totemic myth involving a ritual of initiation. The latter is accurate but frequently given a misdirected focus that illuminates the role of old Ben but excludes other crucial factors. The totemic aspects of the myth are expressed not through Ben but through Sam Fathers, through the cognitive strategies that define his world, his being and belonging. To fully understand this myth we must separate Sam from the romanticized version of him fostered by Ike McCaslin. It is only in Ike's eyes that Sam recalls a watered-down version of Rousseau's "noble savage" or embodies the rather simplistic Christian virtues of humility and prelapsarian purity. Perhaps the most obvious example of this misconception is found in the different treatments of the name "Fathers." For Ike the word raises questions of genealogy and patrimony. Hence, Sam belies his name and betokens a terrible sense of an ending for the noble Indian race (already tainted in Sam's mixed blood) "now drawing toward the end of its alien and irrevocable course, barren, since Sam Fathers had no children" (p. 165). The factual accuracy of Ike's observation joins two ideas that Sam himself might not associate; that Sam has no children and that the Indian race is disappearing have almost a causal connection in Ike's mind, but the name "Fathers" does not function to make the same connections for Sam. We
should see his treatment of his name in the same context as the
title he applies to the great buck of "The Old People," the breath­
taking animal he addresses: "'Oleh, Chief . . . Grandfather'" (p. 184).  
Sam is a chief although the privileged, hierarchical nature of
this role is played down; he is a chief without a tribe; he rules not
by election or rights of descent but by a "natural" right. In part,
Ike recognizes this: "there was something running in Sam
Fathers' veins which ran in the veins of the buck too" (p. 350),
yet Sam's reverence before the stag means neither that he
confuses his actual parentage with that of the animal nor that he
recognizes his human grandfather reincarnated as a deer. Either
belief would prevent him from hunting these sacred animals.
Rather than taboo, the buck is a totem animal for Sam. It
identifies his tribal belonging, membership in what we might call
the "deer tribe" whose primary social and "economic" activities
are hunting. We should remember that Sam is never at home in
civilization, and he leaves his "shop" to return to the forest as a
hunter (pp. 173-74). The great buck "mediates" conflicts
inherent in the hunt between forces on which the tribe's very
existence depends. Deer are both the product for sustaining life
(food) and the focus of an activity that ends life (death as the goal
of the hunt). Sam's identity, therefore, is bound up with the
totemic myth of hunter and prey and is not dependent on
"humility" and sinless "purity." His hunting prowess is natural,
not supernatural or mystical, and his myth gives him certain
charter rights to the forest, detailing for him autochthonous
origins that take no notice of the white man's legal "owner­
ship." Sam is not confronted with the problem of patrilineal
inheritance that disturbs Ike; he does not feel, as Ike does, that it
is a "sin" to sell the wilderness (in fact his father did sell it), and
he does not (nor, ironically, could his father) even conceive of
that manner of ownership.
He belongs to the forest, to his tribe, and to the practical
function of hunting; his membership in this collective group
confers on him an individual identity that is at the same time a
kind of "typicality." Here, as Cassirer says, "the feeling of self" is
"immediately fused with a definite mythical-religious feeling of
community." But it is not therein a loss of self, for "Myth is one
of those spiritual syntheses through which a bond between 'I' and
'thou' is made possible, through which a definite unity and a definite contrast, a relation of kinship and a relation of tension, are created between the individual and the community." Sam, without confusing the self and the other, identifies with his grandfather through the mediating totem of the deer, which is not a symbol of generation but a unity of opposites—life and death, food and the kill. Sam's sense of belonging is an assertion of his collective individuality. "The whole [community or myth] and its parts are interwoven, their destinies are linked, as it were—and so they remain even after they have been detached from one another in pure fact." Accordingly, Sam's attitude toward the hunt for old Ben is very different from Ike's. As a hunt it demands the testing of strength between opposing forces; it necessitates, in this particular instance, the proper dog. This is both a practical need and a reflection of the eternal conditions of hunting, a paradoxical balancing of life and death. Sam accepts the conditions without apparent emotion just as he matter-of-factly states that "'somebody is going to [kill Ben] someday'" (p. 212). When the proper dog arrives, Sam greets him with "neither exultation nor joy nor hope," and Ike thinks that "Sam had known all the time ... it had been foreknowledge in Sam's face that morning" (pp. 214-15). It is, of course, "foreknowledge" based on recognition and simple faith. The arrival of Lion, the proper opposing force for Ben, is guaranteed by Sam's natural world of the hunt, a continuous, orderly tension between hunter and prey that defines the extremes of life and death for him. This is the heart of the lesson that Sam tries to teach Ike: that, to use Ike's own cryptic and not quite comprehending terms, "by possessing one thing other, he would possess them both." (p. 296). Ike's response to Lion is wholly different, a repeated refrain: "So he should have hated and feared Lion" (pp. 209, 212, 226); the dog's sudden and seemingly magical appearance foreshadows for him an apocalyptic ending and a permanent loss. "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 didn't know what except that he would not grieve. 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"
His nostalgia, fitted out with stoic acceptance, reawakens a questioning sense of moral worthiness and freedom from sin. The end here is an end of innocence, and he argues but gets no response from Sam, that "it must be one of us [to kill Ben]. So it won't be until the last day" (p. 212). None of these considerations occurs to Sam; there is for him no temporality eventuating in fatalism; there is only the recurrence of the eternal act of the hunt here raised to the level of the typical. Typicality, therefore, is more than the mere familiar plenitude of experience, but less than the apocalyptic. "Out of the mass of impressions which pour in on consciousness in any given moment of time certain traits must be retained as recurrent and 'typical' as opposed to others which are merely accidental or transient; certain factors must be stressed and others excluded as nonessential." Typicality results from man's most basic efforts to order his experience, efforts that can be shared in a sense of community but that resist, then, intrusion from alien cultures. Ike attempts to impose his attitudes on Sam, "It was almost over now and he [Sam] was glad" (p. 215); for Sam, however, the hunt is no end but a culmination of the vital forces of life, no last day but a most typical day. The inevitable conflict between Lion and Ben betokens for Sam an embracing, participatory, continuation of life, not an apocalyptic moment that, as Ike sees it, excludes all those who are unworthy.

Significantly, Ike's most unselfconscious moment of participation comes not in the hunt but in listening to Sam's stories. Here Faulkner promotes Sam Fathers to the role of myth singer, and through his voice Ike is drawn into Sam's world.

As he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted. And more: as if some of them had not happened yet but would occur tomorrow, until at last it would seem to the boy that he himself had not come into existence yet. . . . [P. 171].

This passage is an instructive one for several reasons, some of which I will merely set forth here as anticipations of later
discussion. The focus is on both the affective and expressive (creative) dimensions of story telling, and in the self-conscious repetition of "as if" our attention is called to the narrow gap that exists between fiction and factual history.\textsuperscript{50} It is an act of articulation to experience wherein "the one who speaks is able to effect a rebirth, through his discourse, of an event and his experience of that event."\textsuperscript{51} The discourse itself, of course, is an event, an "as if" event that presents a past event as present experience. It is the storyteller's lie; words uttered in the here and now can evoke, refer to, events, persons, things that have no present existence. The affective import of this special event, however, is primarily a characterization of young Ike's growing romantic consciousness. The storyteller's lie is an act of illusionary presencing (literally a rebirth), a filling up of space and time in what we might call a narrative "digression" from temporal flow. Ike's driving passion is (will be) to dwell in the virtual space of a timeless world as a digression from life. The immediacy of Sam's oral narrative, the nowness and hereness of the event of telling the story, is transferred to the world of historical eventuality in order to stop time in a dream of timelessness. The romantic association of oral language with presence will serve as a refuge from the "written" world that threatens to dismantle Ike's dream wish.

No greater tribute could be given to the singer of tales than recognition of his powers of resurrection, his ability to grant corporeal existence through the "breath and air" of his voice. The experiential world of Kantian spatiotemporal unity is therein contracted into an immediate and present consciousness. As he listens, Ike feels nearer to belonging to Sam's world than he does at the moment of ritual initiation over his first kill (pp. 164, 177-78),\textsuperscript{52} or when he shares in the vision of the great buck Sam calls "grandfather," or even in his confrontations with old Ben (pp. 208, 211). The timelessness of Sam's stories requires of Ike the total surrender of his own, separate-world identity if he is to participate in them, and only this once can he manage to resign the time-dominated apocalypticism that haunts him throughout his life.

The experience is not the same for Sam as it is for Ike. The radical disjuncture of temporality that twists the past into the future reflects a kind of "mythical memory" through which Sam
knows what was and what will be in terms of what is. Like his foreknowledge of Lion, his memory of the past is confirmed by the eternal presentness of his world, and both serve as a guarantee of the future. Sam belongs to the forest world, as Ike never can, because his world expresses for him a pattern of belonging. It is not, one may assume, a pattern that he could describe as an abstract structure, but it is one that he naturally articulates in his stories. It is orderly, though not peaceful, and organized by a code of relationships that have a fundamental and infinite explanatory power for him. His lack of surprise at the arrival of Lion robs the event of any suggestion of the merely accidental; in Sam’s world, predicated on the eternal balancing of the hunter and the hunted, Lion’s appearance is not mere chance but meaningfully necessary in terms of Sam’s myth. It is merely a matter of time. Such a code, of course, explains Sam’s attitude about his own death, for we cannot say with the country doctor that Sam (nor Joe Baker) just “quit” as old people do (p. 248). What appears to Ike and the others as stoical acceptance is, in fact, a carrying out of the code of his existence. Here too it signifies less an ending than a continuation, and Sam “helps” Joe Baker in a ritualistic death as Boon Hogganbeck helps Sam (p. 254).

Boon, himself one-quarter Indian, is logically the only one of the hunting party to perform this crucial function. But his Indian blood is insufficient to confer on him membership in Sam’s cognitive world even though his mixed heritage excludes him from the world of the white hunters. Moreover, Boon is a perpetual child of ten (p. 232) and, hence, never a “man” in Ike’s terms (Ike crosses into “manhood” at twelve). He is condemned to time-innocence “as though time were merely something he walked through as he did through air” (p. 228). Because of Boon’s simple-mindedness Ike misjudges him, believing that it will not be Boon who kills old Ben (p. 235), that Boon, clearly, is not worthy. Yet it is Boon, along with Lion, who accomplishes, unknowingly, the mythical repetition of the eternal hunt. Boon gains temporary entrance into Sam’s world by “marriage,” through the half-comic, sexless wedding of the mongrel dog, Lion, and the mongrel manchild, Boon, described by Faulkner with self-conscious confusion of sexual identities (p. 220). The final mythical struggle, therefore, is a conflict between the
hunter, Boon-Lion, and the prey, Ben. They meet, with a further extension of the sexual imagery, in an embrace that is “almost loverlike” (p. 240). For a moment they seem to arrest time in an enduring stillness that “almost resembled a piece of statuary” (p. 241), but the hesitating terminology of this passage (the repetition of “almost”) defies the apocalyptic freezing of the moment. The conflict of hunter and prey in a violent act of courage and self-destruction is not an end but, Laokoon-like, is an act of love, a preservation and continuation of life in its most typical actions.

At the same time Boon’s fragile belonging is shattered, first by the death of Lion and finally by the ritualistic death of Sam in which Boon finds his own last and self-expelling act of participation. Unlike Ike and the other hunters, he cannot return to the world of business and city dwelling. He is left alone, reduced in his last scene to a terrifying madness. This last appearance of Boon in the novel, carefully placed after Ike’s long internal struggle with his own identity and heritage in section four, stands as a warning that belonging is more than mere choice, mere acceptance or repudiation, more than an act of will. Boon’s only home, humorously yet tragically, is as sheriff of Hoke’s lumber camp, halfway between civilization and the wilderness, between two different yet potentially embracing worlds. His fate, not properly attributable to either his simple-mindedness or his confused parentage, is to be excluded from both of the cognitive worlds of significant choices that define being and identity for the other characters. An even more frightening, though similar, fate awaits Isaac McCaslin.

BELONGING AS ARCHETYPAL: LUCAS BEAUCHAMP

The fate of Boon Hogganbeck would lose much of its affective force were it not for the startling disjuncture of section four, which infuses another cognitive structure into the narrative. This structure, composed of the piecemeal fragments of the McCaslin genealogy, describes a world apart from and clearly in conflict with the wilderness of the hunt. Though it is not a myth in the familiar sense of the term, it nevertheless defines “being” and “belonging” and even at this level of generalization reveals some qualities similar to the totemic myth of Sam Fathers. Like all
myths it functions to mediate contradictions on the level of "mythical logic" (as Sam's deer totem mediates the forces of life and death) that cannot be resolved on the empirical level. But these similarities serve also to point up significant differences between the myth of the hunt and the anti-myth of the McCaslin family. The latter resembles what Edmund Leach, braving the contradiction, calls "the precipitate of the development of an historical tradition"; its importance in the total structure of Go Down, Moses grows from its emphasis on the same kinds of structuring myths Leach finds in his analysis of the Old Testament.53 No doubt this results from the influence of a southern Biblical tradition on Faulkner himself, making the concern with "kinship," with culturally operative systems of "exchange," marriage rules and property ownership, of central thematic and structural importance to his novel.

The fragmentary manner in which the McCaslin family myth is presented to us makes it a more problematical structure than the seemingly comforting totemic myth of Sam Fathers. Yet neither myth is inherently more orderly, complex, or adequate to experience than the other. Both meet the challenge of the empirical manifold with an exhaustive system of classifications, although the McCaslin myth, involving as it does questions of patrimony and descent, is more continually and self-consciously open to the threat of time and mere chance. To combat the dehumanization of a world ruled by accidentals, the myth of genealogy establishes a permanent, explanatory sense of origins, a genetic nexus that allows any member of the kinship chain to defy chance with the bravado of the reversible claim: "in my beginning was my end." Rather than a chaotic, linear temporality, therefore, such a strategy proves the legitimacy of belonging by transforming temporal succession into the circular structure of a spatially deployed myth; its genetic characteristics do not emphasize origins and final ends in the traditional linear sense but utilize genealogical charts of descent in order to define a perpetually present sense of belonging. That is to say, genealogy become myth, in its spatiality, draws its historicalness into a circular structure around a defining center or mediating figure. This center need not be the "first of the line" but becomes the most legitimate measure of belonging to the line; the center is an
The Pilgrimage of Being

archetype that functions as a prototype for those who claim to belong to the family.

There is, then, a crucial distinction to be made between this historical myth and the nongenealogical, nonhistorical myth of Sam Fathers; the mediating element of Sam’s totemic myth embraces the contradictory extensiveness of his experiential reality through the cognitive ordering of “typicals.” Sam’s world has no center because its identity-conferring power comes not from a kinship chain but from an integral interpenetration of discrete parts in an eternal natural order. On the other hand, the legitimizing function of the archetype is a powerful organizing principle that grants not only identity through kinship but titular rights to family property. The totemic myth of Sam Fathers with its playing down of blood kinship and assertion of autochthonous origins and natural “charter” rights regularizes time into patterns of repetition that are, in their typicality, of little threat to the myth structure’s stability. But genealogical myth, with its emphasis on succession and kinship rules made stable only through the enduring power of its archetypal center, seems always open to self-destruction. Legitimacy is often measured in terms of length of tenure; the oldest family has a privileged position. Yet the center is prey to both inner and outer forces of corruption; the purity of descent is threatened by exogamous marriage and by decay through the weakness of memory. Indeed, the genealogical myth, once it has achieved stability, seems to deliberately open itself again to the challenge of linearity and the threat of chance.

Faulkner begins his use of genealogical myth by emphasizing the vague sense of beginnings in the McCaslin family. The title of the first story of Go Down, Moses is simply “Was,” and it opens for the reader, almost without his being aware of it, a series of questions about origins. The copula “was” suggests that “something” was at “some” undefined time in the past. Faulkner has forced the verb form to serve as a noun, and we ask not only “what was?” and “when?” but also “what is the particular significance of this pastness?” The title, however, gives only a direction, and the story itself gives only partial answers. The McCaslin family is without a clear genetic nexus (a reflection of
Faulkner's sense of the fractured history of southern aristocracy; and before it can be transformed into genealogical myth it must find an organizing center—a center that, as it turns out, never defines the "original origin" very clearly.

The function of the copula, then, becomes a crucial structural key. Because it grammatically joins both anterior and posterior elements, it suggests not only pastness but linear and homogeneous temporality; in a word, it suggests history. The function is essentially métonymie: the emphasis on a linear arrangement of elements in a structurally coherent chain; but it is also open at both ends, and this sets up a sense of structural (and spatial) play. "Was" evokes both a feeling of system (the potentially closed or limited) and a feeling of boundless movement, transformation, and change within the very concept of infinite systematicity. Its métonymic nature is historicity in small, the shuffling and organizing of endlessly plentiful particularity (moments or events) under the ever-present suggestiveness of order; one could say that history so conceived is "fallen" mythology or, conversely, a special form of discourse that aspires to the condition of myth (although it must never be confused with myth). Faulkner takes this complex suggestion of history, however, and adds another dimension to it. By using the verb "was" in the traditional position of a noun, he opens up another structural order that allows the infinite possibilities of meaningfulness in the individual moment or particular event to defy either historical or mythical reductiveness; the particular stands on its own significance yet without denying its dependency on more comprehensive structural orders.

The subject of the first story, the subject element of the copula "was," is the first story itself, but there is a typical Faulknerian disjuncture in this self-reflexiveness. The story is a separable element with its own adequate structure or Aristotelian wholeness. The theme of marriage, which drives the plot to completion, is neatly wrapped up in the case of the slaves Tennie and Terrel, and the parallel marriage plot, involving the whites Sophonsiba Beauchamp and Buck McCaslin, has at least a false resolution in Buck's temporary escape from the persistent Sophonsiba. In its seeming internal wholeness the story presents itself, therefore, as a privileged moment, an objectified fragment of the past, but the suggestion of infinite regression in the title
denies this moment, and any moment, privileged status. This conflict implanted in the reader's mind forces him to acknowledge the discrete "presence" of the individual story, its humorous and lively characterization, rich descriptive detail, and satisfying plot while it also raises the question of "absence," the "when" and "where" of a covering structure to which this isolated moment belongs as one moment among many. The reader's response to such a conflict is reinforced by the unexplained and surely abrupt "naming" of the novel's hero, Isaac McCaslin, on the first pages of "Was." Ike is not a part of the story itself, nor even present to remember the action (p. 4); the moment took place before he was born. "Why," the reader wonders, "is he introduced here; who are the people told about and what is Ike's relation to them?" We are trapped between the moment and the pattern.

The plot of "Was," activated by Terrel's plan to marry Tennie over the objections of their respective masters, suggests a most significant set of relationships for the novel as a whole. Terrel, somewhat cryptically, reveals his strategy to Ike's cousin McCaslin Edmonds: "'Anytime you wants to git something done, from hoeing out a crop to getting married, just get the women-folks to working at it.'" (p. 13). The idea is to entangle his own fate with that of Sophonsiba and Buck, and the device Faulkner uses to convey that entanglement is a poker game. It is marvelously adequate to this end; humorous and entertaining, this supposed game of chance establishes the crucial terms of the McCaslin genealogy through a superficially confusing but finally logical system of bluffs and betting ploys. Slaves, women, money, and property function as equivalent media of exchange. Moreover, in the process of the games the two major branches of the McCaslin family interact; the black and white descendants of old Carothers McCaslin share a common fate without, however, clear thematic association.

The interaction of the two McCaslin lines continues throughout Go Down, Moses. This is the central action of the second story "The Fire and the Hearth" whose hero Lucas Beauchamp is the son of Terrel and Tennie. The question raised here involves the legitimacy of various claims to the McCaslin land. Lucas is one of only two patrilineal descendants of the patriarch, Carothers McCaslin, but Lucas is black. The other direct male-line heir is
Isaac McCaslin, the son of Sophonsiba and Buck, who is white but has repudiated his claim to the land. Thus, actual possession of the farms has fallen to the matrilineral line beginning with McCaslin Edmonds, and continuing through his son Zack and grandson Roth. The legitimacy of ownership is as complicated as the poker game of "Was," but lacks even the suggestion of the element of chance. The problem is to establish the proper rules, and this involves the primary consideration of laws of exchange, the proper transference of women, slaves, money, and property within the kinship system. Lucas Beauchamp expresses the confusion neatly in an excellent Faulknerian inversion: "'Old Cass [McCaslin Edmonds] a McCaslin only on his mother's side and so bearing his father's name though he possessed the land and its benefits and responsibilities; Lucas a McCaslin on his father's side though bearing his mother's name and possessing the use and benefit of the land with none of the responsibilities'" (p. 44). This conflict within the kinship structure makes the fundamental questions of belonging and being subject to the same confusion.

The system of exchange established in "Was" is reactivated in "The Fire and the Hearth"; the conflict between the black and white, patrilineal and matrilineral, lines comes to a focus on Lucas's wife Mollie. It is resolved only through a ritual confrontation that gives rise to a mediating, archetypal figure. On the empirical level, however, there is only contradiction. Lucas, even after the ritual action has mediated the conflict, still ponders its experiential impossibility: "'How to God . . . can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?'" (p. 59). Yet as he muses on this dilemma he has already asked for and received the promise, not so much as a verbal agreement but in an archetypal moment of union through conflict. Lucas has already asserted his rights within the kinship rules, the patrilineal rights that make his wife taboo to other men. These rights (though empty of "legal" import) are guaranteed against the encroachment of Zack, the matrilineal descendant, but they are not guaranteed against Zack's assertion of his white supremacy. When Lucas tells Zack, "'I wants my wife,'" he speaks in the legitimacy of his blood descent; he is the grandson
(and great grandson) of old Carothers McCaslin, whose incestuous relations with his own half-black slave daughter resulted in the birth of Terrel, Lucas's father. Under the laws of patrilineal descent it is unclear whether or not Carothers's taking of his own daughter is forbidden; it is clear, however, that the doubling of Lucas's patrilineal rights gives him strong claim against Zack, for Mollie cannot be freely exchanged without risking a break in the line of male descendants. Carothers, however, has also broken a social taboo that separates the black and white races, and in this sense Zack's taking of Mollie represents a continuation, a mythic repetition that will be repeated again.

The sense of repetition for a brief time stymies Lucas; there is a social and genealogical inevitability to Zack's actions. Significantly, Lucas recalls the events leading up to the taking of Mollie in mythological terms. He is sent across swollen rivers to fetch a doctor for Zack's white wife dying in childbirth (the child is Roth). It is a journey into and return from death, a rebirth from the river "Lethe" only to find "a world . . . subtly and irrevocably altered" (p. 46). At this point Lucas wishes to reestablish his life the way "it had used to be" (p. 48), but this wish is fulfilled not simply by returning to the "good old days." The wish actively raises the inherent conflicts of his heritage (reawakened by Zack's taking of Mollie to replace his dead wife) to a mythical level—a level where mediation is possible. Lucas's rebirth is, therefore, rebirth into essential knowledge; memory is transformed from nostalgic yearning to that "mythical memory" that is of past, present, and future.

Thus Lucas realizes what he must do almost as if he had already done it; he asserts his patrilineal rights by taking Mollie back. He challenges Zack to a physical confrontation and carries the fight to him when Zack seemingly will not respond. He enters Zack's bedroom in the early dawn for what is, on the empirical level, a final confrontation between black and white, yet as he does so he begins to make manifest in his actions the conflicts of his and Zack's family heritage. Holding his open razor prepared for the sacrifice of the peaceful, sleeping victim—a sacrifice that in actuality will never be—Lucas forces the empirical to the level of myth. "In the first of light he mounted the white man's front steps and entered the unlocked front door and traversed the
silent hall and entered the bedroom which it seemed to him he had already entered and that only an instant before, standing with the open razor above the breathing, the undefended and defenseless throat, facing again the act which it seemed to him he had already performed" (p. 52). Here in an instant of timelessness past and future are joined in a present composed of the conflicts between black and white, patrilineal and matrilineal lines. The two men, though significantly unlike, are, Lucas tells us, "brothers, almost twins" (p. 47). The potential for mediation is here in the dioscuri, but only if Lucas can force Zack into an active response. The process is gradual but finally successful, and the climactic moment comes (so much like the violent moment of the killing of Ben) over the "center of the bed" (p. 57), the sacred spot that functions as what Leach calls the "middle ground, abnormal, non-natural, focus of all taboo and ritual observance." In a moment of time transformed by ritual action into the echo of a myth, the precarious balance of irreconcilable opposites is held in tension.

The significance of this moment reverberates throughout the novel. Indeed, the conflict of crossed cultural codes is a frequent narrative structure in Faulkner's novels that speaks nothing less than a cultural myth, the myth of the author's South. Complex and unresolvable in their many manifestations, the fundamental terms of this contradiction in Go Down, Moses are relatively simple. The codes involved express two immutable laws: (1) that lines of descent are measured through the heritage of the father and son, are patrilineal, and (2) that marriage rules are racially endogamous, thereby supporting the cultural hierarchy where whites rule blacks. The endogamous system, however, is severely restrictive upon the white group; it depends upon a plentiful supply of white females in the culture—on availability. It is further restricted by another code (only vaguely present in Go Down, Moses but explicit in many other Faulkner novels) outlining the taboo against incest. As a result of this complex of rules certain exceptions have arisen. To preserve the scarce supply of white women and the racial "purity" of the feudal South an extraordinarily strict code bars relations between white females and black males, but the inverse is not true. Relations between white males and black females are "permissible" with the crucial provision that no offspring of such a union be given "legal"
The McCaslin family patriarch, old Carothers, has, with one "possible" exception, abided by these codes, but that exception has seemingly raised an unresolvable conflict. A simplified chart of these codes may help in visualizing the problem. It is the broken line of "incest" that disrupts the balance of the chart; this is, of course, what Ike sees as the McCaslin "sin," but more importantly it is the act that gives Lucas equal status with Ike in the patrilineal system. The confrontation between Lucas and Zack, therefore, brings several codes into play. Zack, as a white, has the advantage over Lucas, a black, but Lucas, as a "double" direct male descendant, has the advantage over Zack, a descendant on the female side. They are not quite equally balanced, and the symbolic "marriage" of the dioscuri only momentarily mediates the conflict.

As the tension breaks itself apart, Lucas emerges into an archetypal presence through his confrontation with the "other." It is he who possesses the icon of the struggle, the misfired bullet, still "live" as it contains "two lives" (p. 58); it is Lucas who,
through his mixture of white and black blood, gains the slight advantage over Zack in order to assert his patrilineal dominance over the matrilineal line. He is, henceforth, the centering force of the McCaslin genealogical myth—a position recognized by Roth Edmonds many years later even though he does not know of the ritual confrontation (p. 114).

He could see Lucas standing there in the room before him... the face which was not at all a replica even in caricature of his grandfather McCaslin's but which had heired and now reproduced with absolute and shocking fidelity the old ancestor's entire generation and thought—the face which, as old Isaac McCaslin had seen it that morning forty-five years ago, was a composite of a whole generation of fierce and undefeated young Confederate soldiers, embalmed and slightly mummified—and he thought with amazement and something very like horror: He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all geography and climate and biology which sired Old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless, faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own. [P. 118]

For Roth, Lucas centers the myth so completely that he contains more of life than that represented in the McCaslin line; he stands for the conflicts of the whole southern tradition, unresolved, preserved, and born again in another form.

It was as if he were not only impervious to that [McCaslin] blood, he was indifferent to it. He didn't even need to strive with it. He didn't even have to bother to defy it. He resisted it simply by being the composite of the two races which made him, simply by possessing it. Instead of being at once the battleground and victim of the two strains, he was a vessel, durable, ancestryless, non-conductive, in which the toxin and its anti stalemated one another. . . . [P. 104]

Ultimately, Ike too affirms Roth's conclusion, in characterize more romantic terms. He argues that Lucas takes only "three quarters" of his grandfather's, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin's, first name, "'taking the name and changing, altering it, making it no longer the white man's but his own, by himself composed, himself selfprogenitive and nominate, by himself ancestored, as, for all the old ledgers recorded to the contrary, old Carothers himself was'" (p. 281).
It is crucial to note here the subtle distinctions between Roth's and Ike's descriptions of Lucas. Ike's romantic imagination is obsessed with origins and endings, with the romantic idea that time can be overcome in the archetype of self-creativity; the act of self-naming is conflated with the egocentric dream of self-progenesis. Roth, though tempted by the egoism of the archetypal center, perceives the endless reverberations and echoes through time, across space, that shatter the family myth in order to project a more encompassing cultural myth of the South. For Roth, Lucas represents a "loop" in the narrative flow of family (genealogical) and cultural (southern) history, a repetition that turns back upon itself and stands as an archetype for the history of the culture. In Lucas a mediating answer is found for the infinitely regressive temporality of "Was." The necessity of origins, missing from the McCaslin ledgers, emerges in Lucas; it is, of course, a violent emergence, momentary, metaphorical in its expression through the "click," a tenuous centering of the genealogical/cultural (mythical) conflicts that cannot hold against its own internal tensions, although Ike desperately wants the center to hold against the threat of time.

Whatever Ike desires, the novel makes us aware that this is no more and no less than a symbolic centering; Lucas reverses the master/slave roles in order to symbolically replace, act as "supplement" for, the absence of an "original" family patriarch. He takes the "Name" of the (great) (grand)father thereby displacing all other claimants, including Ike, but this is not to say that Lucas transcends his own position in the family structure, that he becomes the present, timeless, apocalyptic, egocentric embodiment of the genealogical myth. The distinction I want to make here concerning Lucas's role in the novel can be expressed in two different ways. Linguistically, Lucas's act of self-naming is a form of catachresis, a misuse of language involving a disjunction in transmission or etymology. "Lucius" (old Carothers) is corrupted into "Lucas," the latter bearing, as Ike notices, a dissimilar similarity to the former. The catachresis reveals not only change and alteration (Ike's temporal terms) but also the timeless process of linguistic substitution (the paradigmatic function where one term is allowed to take the place of another). Free exchange in the Lucius/Lucas ratio speaks for a free inversion of the master/slave roles. It is, therefore, the idea of a
centering archetype (overextended by Ike) that "Lucas" (the name) represents in the narrative; we are encouraged to read "Lucas" with every mention of "Lucius" and, conversely, "Lucius" for "Lucas." Such is the force of patronymia, which in this present issue tells us much about the McCaslin (and Southern) desire for a stabilized family (cultural) myth marked by originary presence.

This desire can be expressed in another way: in terms of the psychosocial relationships of the family. Family history, genealogical myth, in Go Down, Moses must not be interpreted literally, that is, in the familiar (visual) manner we all often use in saying that a child is the "image" (Roth uses the term "replica") of one or the other parent. Lucas is the "image" of old Carothers through the act a "mapping." Lucas fills the function-role of imaging forth old Carothers because it is designated to him by the other members of the family. After all, Roth has never seen old Carothers, and Ike's claim that Lucas consciously corrupted Lucius's name is mere speculation. This designatory action (which Lucas only gradually comes to accept, never understands, and learns to exploit) expresses an intense sense of "need" (familial and cultural). For Roth the need arises from the "inherited" weakness of his matrilineal claim to the McCaslin land, but it also springs from a sense of guilt (familial and cultural), even if unconscious. Lucas is established in a role of circumscribed power, as authority and yet as ward, as father and yet as child. Lucas's archetypical function bears, for Roth, the ambiguity of the McCaslin and southern codes, both threatening and comforting, self-destructive and conserving. This twofold movement is even more clearly represented through Ike, whose romantic delusions of selfprogenesis designate Lucas as the image of McCaslin origins in a direct countermovement to his own great repudiation of the role of family patriarch. That repudiation is an unsettling, an opening that not only needs to be filled but also calls attention to the self-destructive potential hidden within the family and southern social structure, in the revolutionary idea that one can reject one's heritage.

The significance of this patterning for the narrative of Go Down, Moses, for Faulkner's work as a whole, and, perhaps, for the general theory of narrative, cannot be overstated. It reflects both a theory of language usage and of cultural functioning. The
matter is hopelessly tangled, for Ike, in the issue of original sin: the fact of the sin is clear but the origin and consequences remain clouded in the infinite regression of "Was." That "initial" story opens the door partway by establishing the social economy of the family and culture based on the exchange of women, slaves, money, and property; yet it remains for Ike, in the fourth part of "The Bear," to discover the value restrictions of that social economy in the McCaslin ledgers. There money, writing, property, slaves, marriage, and sin are mingled, and because of this mingling "original" sin may not be established as "originary." The sin is not a beginning act but an enabling act, the very essence of the exchange system itself, which, therefore, reflects no beginning or ending, no before or after. This, then, is the source of Ike's neurotic fear of time.

The system of exchange as it is presented in "Was" equates women, slaves, money, and property, but such an exchange economy is too simple for an agrarian-capitalist system (which still bears traces of feudal morality) like that of the old South. The later stories make the value restrictions much clearer. Women who are not slaves (white women) are exchangeable, through marriage contracts (conventions), only on specific levels of society. The exchange has to do with a hierarchy of the ruling white class (land owners) that permits upward mobility for white women only when scarcity of class-equal white women is intense (see Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!). Women who are also slaves (black women) function in a freer system of exchange because they cannot function as media for the transmission of "legal" rights. They can, ironically, transmit a "name" insofar as we are justified in seeing "Lucas" as a corrupt borrowing of "Lucius." This name is a mark of biological kinship, but it is not a sign of legal rights; it is not the family name. As a result of this set of restriction-distinctions, the exchange of white women is remarkably limited, whereas the exchange of black women is potentially unlimited. Moreover, the distinction between white women and black women as media of economic exchange involves a radical distinction in function value; it is a distinction not unlike that in linguistics between "icon" and "sign." The white woman as "icon" is society (hence, the antithesis of an antisocial act like incest). As icon she embodies a host of seemingly incompatible ideas: (1) the idea of repression and postponed
gratification of sexual desires (in the sacralizing of the marriage ritual), (2) the consequent displacement of "natural" desires (values) into artificial "needs" (values) as in the amassing of wealth or in the artificial inflating of values like those of the icon itself, (3) authoritarian control of the medium of exchange (money), (4) conservatism, and (5) scarcity and exploitation. The black woman functions as a sign possessing only "exchange value," as in the "free" substitution one for another. The black woman as sign expresses: (1) unrepressed desire or promiscuity, (2) consequently, the ideal of "natural" or nonartificially inflated values, (3) unrestricted flow of the medium of exchange, (4) anarchy, and (5) the ideal of plenitude.

This is a cultural myth considerably more inclusive than can be expressed by any one or all of Faulkner's novels. Yet the disturbances of family/cultural stability that drive forward the narrative of Go Down, Moses uncover these mythic patterns; those disturbances arise for two reasons. First, the extraordinarily restrictive exchange value of the icon makes it less functional (less available and artificially more valuable) in social commerce than the sign. Second, these two functions, icon and sign, are not discrete elements in the social structure: if black and white women are distinct as to race, they are indistinct as to gender and the function of transmitting biological kinship (recall Lucas's corrupt name). This latter function must not be misunderstood (as, for example, Ike misstates it); the black woman conveys biological kinship even if the black child of a white father inherits no legal rights. We cannot, therefore, dismiss the distinctive treatment of black women and white women by drawing a line between sex (promiscuity) and marriage (purity), for biological kinship is a possible issue of both. Old Carothers's sin must be viewed ambiguously, as sin and not-sin, as both the affirmation and questioning of a social law that runs to the very heart of the social structure. One cannot say simply that incest taboos apply to white women and not to black women, for that would necessitate an absolute distinction between white women as "of society" and black women as "outside society" (as "natural").

The genealogical obsession with forefathers in Go Down, Moses exposes a complex of cultural attitudes. There is expressed in this an Oedipal subjugation to the father/archetype, a sense of guilt
that has as its basis little more than the awarding of priority to the father/archetype (hence, Roth's inability to take action against Lucas). Yet it also asserts the longing to be at one with the forefathers (the desire for atonement). This "at-oneness" is unavoidably repressive; it is the basis for a differentiation between belonging and exclusion, between master and slave. On the cultural level it is the basis of segregation, the ideology of racial purity, and authoritarian political power. Repression here appears as the foundation of social order by defining through prohibitions the distinction between culture and nature. The incest taboo, in fact, can be said to create (promiscuous) desire in order to exclude it from culture, and thus southern culture can be said to invest in the black woman all of those promiscuous desires that, through prohibition, negatively define the culture of the white (master) race. Black women as slaves, however, are an essential medium of exchange in society. They are not absolutely distinct in function from white women who are also a medium of exchange (if highly restricted) in social commerce.

What Ike discovers as the family "scandal" is the conventional emptiness of the incest taboo, its arbitrary or "sign-function" value. It is not the fact of incest as sexual act or even as psychological desire that is shocking. It is the ambiguous manner of its social encoding. The word "incest" never appears in the ledgers, and its absence tempts us to assign it magical powers, as a kind of negative icon asserted by its exclusion from the articulate, written world of family/social orderliness. The ledgers, as a commercial narrative history of the McCaslin family, assert their existence (and the family's existence) over against the non-existence of the term "incest." The iconic presence of the family/social order is based on the prohibition (repression) of incest, its absence. But the illusion of negative iconicity here proves to be just that, an illusion. The ledgers' willful silence on the matter does not really exclude it from society. What should be guilt for sin is expressed in terms of an exchange of money. Sin, literally, can be bought off; incest has a price in the commercial structure of exchange. More importantly, the confusion of money, slaves, property, and women (white and black) argues for a series of linguistic exchanges that explains the economic as well as moral basis of the family/society.

For example: (+ or -) incest correlates with (black or white)
close-kin woman. The distinction is nothing more than a matter of convention, for presumably (-) incest or incest prohibition comes into play when the (white) option is selected as an attribute of close-kin woman. But the ledgers overreact to this convention by "silencing" the term "incest" altogether, and that overreaction (guilt) creates the family riddle that Ike is compelled to solve, to articulate. He must speak the unspeakable, a paradoxical activity that forces him to see that (-) incest or incest prohibition does correlate with (black) woman, otherwise the money payoff would not have been necessary and the primary clue to the riddle's solution would not have been written. Finally, if (-) incest or incest prohibition is not the mark that separates family/society from "nature," from anarchy and promiscuity, if it is not the basis for an absolute distinction between the "icon" or culture (as racial purity and authority) and the "sign" of nature (as unrepressed desire), then anarchy and desire creep into the very fabric of culture itself. The icon is little more than an overdetermined sign; the class structure contains the seeds of its own destruction; revolution is contained in the potential of inversion of terms (e.g. master/slave, white/black) through unrestricted exchange (substitution).

It is not the dog Lion, but the McCaslin ledgers that Ike fears. It is an attitude that causes him to fear writing in general, to prefer the oral society of Sam Fathers as a type of Rousseauistic retreat. Ike's Rousseauism, however, is confounded by the same contradictions that underlie the McCaslin family myth. Expressed in a series of geographical/moral clichés, the "South" is opposed to the "North" in order to define cultural value on the basis of privileged origins. Rousseau's oppositional categories easily merge with similar distinctions articulated by defenders of the American South. The South is associated with passion (often expressed in the desire for origins), with agrarian love of the soil (or the primeval forest), and the illusion of eternal presence or plenitude. The South is tribal; it is preliterate (a lingering ideal still extant in the special treatment of oral contracts in the South, the giving of one's word), and, therefore, it is not only the repository of, but is also possessed by, oral language. The North replaces passion with cold logic, replaces love of the soil with the commerce of restricted commodity exchange, and replaces the dream of plenitude with the fear of scarcity that creates artificial
need (the basis of industrial productivity and overproductivity for profit/wealth). The North is national or international as opposed to tribal; it is essentially literate (emphasizing the supplementarity of exchange involving ownership of real property and contractual communality). The southern myth establishes the North as destroyer of the idyllic South, and it is a natural association that allows Ike to fix the destruction of the South in the very fact of writing (the ledgers). The North is the dreaded otherness, foreign, inauthentic; the North debases southern passion (desire for origins) into northern need/scarcity (originless supplementarity).

But the fatal irony of Ike’s discovery is the revelation of the dreaded northern otherness within the South itself. Insofar as the southern myth is embodied in the icon of the white woman (purity, innocence) it is, from the beginning, threatened by need/scarcity, by the too great restrictiveness that necessitates exceptions to the rules of exchange for the sake of self-preservation. Thus northern supplementarity (sign-functioning) comes to “be” at the very moment that the southern icon is “conceived.” Rules of restrictive usage like the incest taboo operate as repressive forces on one level (with regard to white women) and are relaxed as an indulgence of passion on another level (with regard to black women). Ike discovers in the McCaslin ledgers the written evidence of supplementarity within the myth of presence, which is to say that he discovers writing (as corruption) already there.

There is, of course, some justification for the southern claim that a northern invasion is a prelude to a fatal dispersal. The oppositions—industrial versus agrarian, technological labor versus human labor, centralized government versus local control, liberal versus conservative (as a series of not quite congruent pairs)—express the dread of the fall from plenitude and authenticity, the dread that paternalistic authority can be replaced by an anonymous authority. The North, as representative of industrial capitalism, is attacked for its dispersal of the biological family unit in order to replace that unity with the “company family,” in order to replace the biological father with the “corporate father.” The dehumanizing effect on the worker (child) of the corporate family is easily seen in the free substitution that takes place throughout the national/international
structure of the company; "transferrals" are the same as free "sign-supplements." Northern industrial capitalism, of course, may not be any more dehumanizing and exploitative than southern agrarian capitalism; southern bond slavery itself substitutes easily for northern wage slavery. But the issue here is not at this level moral (although it must ultimately be so understood). What is to be grasped is that otherness, as a necessary element in self-definition, self-preservation (or even using Ike's term, selfprogenesis), is not a simple outwardness to be excluded by an easy differential definition. Endogamy discovers within itself a necessary exogamy (as reciprocity); oral language as myth of plenitude and presence reveals an inward "writing" as scarcity and supplementarity; belonging (as to a family or a society) is a matter of conflicting impulses between repression and rebellion. Lucas's emergence as the McCaslin archetype articulates this conflict; he is the origin (preservation) and self-destruction of the McCaslin family.

Lucas's archetypal presence, however enduring and mythical it is, does not rob him of his individuality or particularity. He lives in the world, in its petty, daily circumstance, supported by the confidence of his position in the family myth. His status in that world gives him certain power over it, and his freedom to act within the permissive limits of his myth (the myth that he himself centers) often results in Faulkner's best humor. Lucas's comic willfulness is the subject of the other half of "The Fire and the Hearth," the action that results from the finding of a buried gold coin. The scene is filled with mythic possibilities; the money comes from the earth, from a potentially sacred place called the "Indian mound." But Lucas sees it in terms of his own myth, as money once buried by old Buck and Buddy McCaslin and, hence, his own property by rights of inheritance. Lucas is tempted by an apocalyptic view of the incident worthy of Ike, but all this is wrapped in the temporality of his own genealogical myth. "For the next five hours he crawled on hands and knees among the loose earth, hunting through the collapsed and now quiet dirt almost grain by grain, pausing from time to time to gauge by the stars how much remained of the rapid and shortening spring night, then probing again in the dry insensate dust which had yawned for an instant and vouchsafed him one blinding glimpse of the absolute and then closed" (pp. 38-39). The phrasing of
the passage is extraordinarily rich, measuring Lucas’s “absolute” right to the money as “heir and prototype” against the moment by moment, “grain by grain,” “time by time” (and later in the same passage, “coin by coin”), temporality of his existence. The story of Lucas’s search for gold takes on the form of the tall tale, the frontier humor so prevalent in Faulkner’s later work. Lucas becomes here the trickster, duping almost everyone and narrowly escaping terrible calamity, but this is a confirmation of his archetypal status, not a denial of it. He is a version of Jung’s trickster, the clownish figure who represents the fact that “some calamity or other has happened and been consciously understood,” that, we might say, some conflict or other has been momentarily mediated.

The archetypically centered genealogical myth, however, does not confer upon all of its members the same reassuring barriers against temporality. The historicity of such a myth challenges time in a manner very unlike Sam’s totemic myth, for the archetypal center draws into itself the diversity born of unmediated conflict and forces all to accept its paradoxical embracing of difference. Only Lucas manages to operate, clownishly, within his mixed and conflict-ridden heritage. Roth Edmonds, in his acknowledgment of Lucas’s centrality, falls victim to the myth he belongs to. As a child he knew only Mollie Beauchamp as a mother; yet she is not his mother, and she cannot confer on him the patrilineal heritage of Carothers McCaslin nor the black blood that would allow him to rival Lucas. In the innocence of childhood Roth accepts the fire and hearth of Mollie’s cabin as the center of his world. “Even before he was out of infancy, the two houses had become interchangeable: himself and his foster-brother [Lucas’s son, Henry] sleeping on the same pallet in the white man’s house or in the same bed in the negro’s and eating of the same food at the same table in either, actually preferring the negro’s house, the hearth on which even in summer a little fire always burned, centering the life in it, to his own” (p. 110). But the symbol of the hearth cannot prevent his fall into experience; the archetypal center does not deny time and reality but organizes it, gives it meaning. The “interchangeable” function of the “houses” (family divisions) is not innocent but problematical. For Roth this necessitates an entering into the conflicting terms of myth. “Then one day the old curse of his
fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, descended to him” (p. 111).

The presence of the centering archetype contains the nemesis of myth in the accident of geography. The myth confers on the accident a special meaningfulness, but Roth is, nevertheless, caught in the relentless history of the old ledgers, the "fading sequence" returning to the "anonymous, communal, original dust" (p. 261). The same fate does not await Lucas: he seems beyond time. He will, Roth says, "'not only outlive the present Edmonds as he had outlived the two preceding him, but [will] probably outlast the very ledgers which held his account’" (p. 117). For Roth the awareness of his plight is swift and final. "Then one day he knew it was grief and was ready to admit it was shame also, wanted to admit it only it was too late then, forever and forever too late” (p. 112). In the story "Delta Autumn" he is condemned, by the force of the centered myth, to repeat the sins of his fathers without resolving them, to repeat old Carothers's sin and bring the family full circle again around Lucas as the center. But by this point in the novel such matters cannot be assigned to mere accident. "Delta Autumn” opens with what seems like an irrelevant discussion of "circumstance" and "Happen-so" (p. 346) and closes with Ike's lament that Roth's partially black child was born "'just because a box of groceries happened to fall out of a boat'” (p. 360), yet to leave it at this point is too easy. Roth, once again like old Carothers, tries to buy his way out of the incestuous guilt of his actions with the black woman, and once more the family confusion of women, slaves, and money as media of exchange is reasserted. This story neither ends the McCaslin line nor cancels out Lucas's role as archetype. It does not, significantly, end the novel. It emphasizes the temporal opening outward of the archetypal center through Roth's child of mixed blood come "back to home" (p. 362). The archetypal presence of Lucas does not stop time but proves it in its eternal repetitions; it tames accident into meaning. If the McCaslin myth is less comforting than the totemic system of Sam Fathers, it does not fail to speak to experience in order to mediate its inherent conflicts.
The two worlds that emerge through the cognitive strategies of these separate myths stand in tension throughout Go Down, Moses, but their importance to the reader of the novel lies not so much in their epistemological functioning as in the pattern of complex moral commitments that they illuminate. On this level distinctions are not easily made, and it is clearly inadequate to fall back on a simplistic moral thematics that juxtaposes the "innocent" prelapsarian world of Sam Fathers against the "fallen" world of the McCaslins, or the wilderness of natural piety against the culture of enslavement and exploitation. To do so is to be trapped by Ike's terminology, to reflect uncritically his romantic sentimentalism. Each of these two worlds makes demands on those who would belong. Sam's totemic myth preserves individual identity as "typicality" through its collective system of differentials; it is an orderly world grounded on the principles of meaningful, balanced conflict, but it can be entered only by sacrificing modern man's obsession with origins and ends, by relinquishing altogether our romantic reverence for uniqueness and originality. Sam's centerless world affords a negative and leveling tyranny by disallowing any significant hierarchy of values within the structure of its discrete parts. It denies even Sam's truly privileged stature just as it renders the hunt for old Ben a typical rather than an atypical moment in time. Conversely, the archetype-centered myth subjugates all who seek to belong by relegating them to mere imitations of the archetype, and with its premium on origins and originality it encourages a cult of "personality." Yet unlike the collective system of typicals in the centerless myth, the archetypal myth exists under the constant threat of dissolution from the pressure of surplus experientiality. The assertive, even violent, emergence of the centering personality sets the pattern for a constant revolution, a series of discontinuous, cataclysmic presencings of newly centered myths.

The opportunity for such a rebellion is offered to Roth Edmonds in "Delta Autumn": through an act of love he could join the black and white, patrilineal and matrilineal McCaslin lines in a marriage that would exclude the heritage of enslave-
ment and exploitation. Through the strength of the black woman, who could truly "have made a man of him" since she offers him a reunion with the patrilineal line of Carothers McCaslin, Roth might have accomplished what Ike never does. But the archetype-centered myth, open as it is to the challenge of temporality, proves its enduring qualities in "Delta Autumn" by absorbing both Roth and Ike into the subjugating terms of its orderliness. Roth repeats the sin of Carothers, and Ike humiliatingly repeats his earlier futile acts of atonement, once more attempting to buy off that sin. It is, perhaps, Ike who suffers most when confronted by the tragic failure of his life. The piercing truth of the black woman's accusation that he is most responsible for Roth's downfall, that his "repudiation" damned Roth to the McCaslin sin, reaches him despite his effort to explain it all away as an accident, "'because a box of groceries happened to fall out of a boat.'" The McCaslin myth traps him at this moment into an assertion of the very bigotry and racism that he sought to avoid. "He cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity, and outrage: 'You're a nigger!'" (p. 361).

The weariness of tone in this pivotal story no doubt reflects Faulkner's sense of his own enslavement to the epistemological and moral limitations of his society; he allows his hero, Ike, to rebel only to fail to bring about the recentering of a new myth, and as a result there is a deepening of romantic individualism until it eventuates in an agonizing existential aloneness. But we would be too hasty if we condemned Faulkner for a pessimism that simply bows to the morality of exploitation; the very conflict between the two worlds, between the totemic and McCaslin myths, affirms a human historicity that encompasses more than any one cognitive system, more than any one myth. Although this does not guarantee a better world in the future, it at least makes possible the freedom to strive for such a world. Thus in the failure of his hero, a failure so often repeated in his novels, and in the long struggle of his career as a writer, we see the constant testing of man's myths, social systems, and moral orders in an effort to articulate to experience a structure of equality and human dignity. If Faulkner implies that man has yet to attain such a world, it is less a resignation to man's impotence than a recognition of fact; the fragmentation of human society into a plurality of epistemological, moral, and political systems, many
of which are enslaving and exploitative, reflects not Faulkner’s failure to construct in this novel an exemplary, idealized aesthetic order, but his vivid articulation of the failure of misguided romantic humanism.

Having repudiated his heritage (not merely his inheritance), Ike chooses for himself the wilderness world of Sam Fathers to which he attributes moral superiority in its egalitarian structure. There Ike hopes to find that black/white distinctions, indeed, that all social and political differences are “indistinguishable” (p. 294) in a “communal anonymity of brotherhood” (p. 257). But Ike is unable to realize this dream, and his abortive efforts to do so result in an ironic exclusion from the brotherhood he so deeply believes in. His “initiations” in the forest are designed to help him reverse the inexorable process of moral maturing, to move instead from experience to innocence, age to youth, from the culture of enslavement to the world of natural piety. Roth’s early perspective on Ike seems to argue that he had accomplished these ends: “born into his father’s old age and himself born old and become steadily younger and younger until ... he had acquired something of a young boy’s high and selfless innocence” (p. 106). Ike’s understanding of Sam’s world, however, is imperfect; rather than a structure of indistinguishable and anonymous parts, it is a structure that elaborates differences. Its order is a result of the balancing of opposites, of conflict, so clearly manifest in the hunt, in the vital forces of life and death. The essential characteristic of this world is its voracious inclusivism, its power to embrace the extensiveness of experience without denying to any particular its individuality. Ike, of course, never views this world from within; his perspective, dominated by its natural temporality, distorts Sam’s wilderness in what we might call overinterpretation. Ike’s romantic high seriousness invests every particular moment, or, better, certain selected moments, with extraordinary meaning, fixes each moment against the onrush of time not in the collectivity of the embracing orderly structure but in uniqueness and exclusive apocalypticism. His effort to escape time, therefore, affirms it through his obsession with “last-dayism”; his consciousness is dominated by the fear of a wilderness shrinking before man’s blind rush for progress. The natural world for him is filled with “momentary
"truth" is not known logically or experientially but is intuited, known in the "heart" (p. 260). As a consequence Ike's life is a patchwork of discontinuous apocalyptic moments.

The anonymous brotherhood eludes him, and his selfless innocence belies a destructive egotism rather than an assertion of communal belonging. Interestingly enough, Roth's opinion of Ike changes by "Delta Autumn"; he no longer sees him as an innocent young boy but as a foolish old man. Moreover, it is clear in this story that Ike's escape from the McCaslin heritage is only partial, that his initiations into innocence in "The Bear" were fatally disrupted by the insertion of section four. There Ike senses that unless the "fading ledgers" can be purged, replaced by a new myth (or an old but morally superior one), the McCaslin family will be condemned to repeat endlessly and meaninglessly the sins of their fathers. Even here, however, his solution is apocalyptic; he would "complete" the story elliptically told by the ledgers (p. 273) and pay off the inheritance that old Carothers willed to his black heirs. His efforts are futile for two reasons: he cannot locate them all (Tennie's Jim has disappeared) and, most crucially, in the very act of trying to complete the story he continues it. In "The Bear" and, with the haunting return of Tennie's Jim's descendants in the black woman and child of "Delta Autumn," he repeats his grandfather's effort to buy off the white man's guilt. Thus in the dispirited final years of his life the McCaslin myth traps him once more in a renunciation of his utopian dream and into a self-debasing racism. Ike is too much of a self-righteous individualist to submit himself to Lucas's superior, archetypal position; he wants to center his own myth, but in trying to do so he is exclusive rather than inclusive. He does not find mediation for the contradictions of his experience; he merely turns them away or reduces them to apocalyptic moments. Such a myth, of course, provides him with no identity through belonging; his fate, ironically, is precisely what he feels Lucas thinks of him, that he "reneged, cried calf-rope, sold [his] birthright, betrayed [his] blood" not for "peace but obliteration" (pp. 108-9).

The significant factor revealed through the character of Ike McCaslin is the enormously complex epistemological and moral confusion that results from his repudiation. Faulkner creates not
only a representative modern character type but a setting, occasion, or world in a state of transition. The agony of his hero results not simply from being caught between two cultures, the one ancient and dying and the other modern and invincible, nor from the simple, though frightening, realization that time relentlessly alters the familiar face of empirical reality. Ike faces a dilemma much deeper and more puzzling, a muddling of epistemologies and moral values that isolates him from other men and neutralizes the effects of his moral commitments. The novel tells of his eighty-year pilgrimage of being only to arrive at the status of "Uncle" Ike; his name, an obvious parody of Sam "Fathers," also expresses the weakest of kinship links in the patrilineal McCaslin line, and Faulkner's mocking heroic epithet, "uncle to half a county but father to no one," reinforces the insignificance of his role in the family system and in the community. The confusion that torments him is best illustrated in the action of the fifth section of "The Bear," where he returns to visit Sam's grave and is surprised by a huge snake. He draws back both in fear and reverence uttering Sam's words, "'Chief . . . Grandfather'" (p. 330), but it is a blatantly ineffectual bit of plagiarism. Whereas Sam hailed his tribal totem in unconscious recognition of the deer's mythical mediating function, Ike substitutes an apocalyptic Christian symbol that belies his freedom from the enslaving yellow ledgers by evoking the image of his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin. The snake, "ancient and accursed" (pp. 329-30), is inappropriate to Sam's world; it carries with it Ike's obsession with original sin and man's "fall" into linear temporality, chronological history.

Ike's metaphors and analogies constantly return upon him with devastating effects. In "Delta Autumn," as he rides once more to the annual hunt, the repetitious and meaningless cycle of his life presses in upon him. He searches for one last analogy that will give proof to his existence, will give him an identity, but his choice is fatal. He notes that his beloved wilderness is disappearing year by year, and he thinks: "the territory in which game still existed [was] drawing inward as his life was drawing inward, until now he was the last of those who had once made the journey . . ." (pp. 335-36). The diminishing outward world reflects his inward being as the circular horizon of his sense of belonging.
contracts to the narrow midpoint of his own consciousness. Driven inward upon himself, alone in a world increasingly alien to him, he returns once more to his apocalyptic visions.

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—himsself and the wilderness—as coeals, his own span as a hunter, a woodsman, not contemporary with his first breath but transmitted to him, assumed by him gladly, humbly, with joy and pride, from that old Major de Spain and that old Sam Fathers who had taught him to hunt, the two spans running out together, not toward oblivion, nothingness, but into a dimension free of both time and space where once more the untreed land warped and wrung to mathematical squares of rank cotton for the frantic old-world people to turn into shells to shoot one another, would find ample room for both—the names, the faces of the old men he had known and loved and for a little while outlived, moving again among the shades of tall unaxed trees and sightless brakes where the wild strong game ran forever before the tireless belling immortal hounds, falling and rising phoenix-like to the soundless guns. [P. 354]

The movement of the passage depicts a too easy transition in Ike's mind from the terrifying, discontinuous temporality of the "spans running out together" (that should logically end in oblivion, nothingness) to a denial of oblivion in the assertion of the apocalyptic, immortal world of soundless guns. The lesson of Sam's totem, which mediates the conflict of life and death, is here transformed into the metaphor of the phoenix, but the metaphor is a failure because, unlike Sam's totem, it cannot transform empirical reality into eternality, nor can it banish absence (obliteration) in the assertion of a magical presence. The long journey that the hunters make, longer every year, denies the apocalypse, and Faulkner jars his readers out of the metaphorical allure with the abrupt short sentence that follows this passage: "He had been asleep" (p. 354). Even the analogy of Ike's inner and outer worlds is destroyed a few moments later when one of the young hunters says, "'Uncle Ike ... aint got any business in the woods this morning'" (p. 355).

Oblivion, nothingness, and obliteration have pursued Ike relentlessly, and now the very wilderness against which he has
The Pilgrimage of Being

measured his own being is not only disappearing but has become alien to him. The reverence and respect that young Ike held for Sam Fathers is not perpetuated for Uncle Ike in the attitudes of the young hunters he instructs (p. 335), and Ike's apocalyptic dreams have proved no stay against time. The poverty of Ike's being results from a very narrow and romanticized version of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*. The words Faulkner attributes to Ike in the form of an indirect quotation, introduced in the long passage above by "he knew," purport an existence for Ike that follows from the very act of thinking itself, "from the issuance of any proposition whatever." The entire dream passage functions as such a proposition (although it erodes into metaphor), and through its power as a performative act attributes being to the speaker in the form of a mind that knows. But it is a very narrow being at best, unmindful of the other, of the experiential reality that surrounds the thinker-speaker. It is a being without spatio-temporal presence (hence, the fall into failed metaphor), bloodless, fleshless and, because it asserts being only in the performative act, fatally impermanent, requiring assertion again and again. Tending toward a discontinuous sequence of apocalyptic moments, such a being is subjective, devoid of experiential content, and removed from the possibility of action or moral commitment.

In response to this morally empty life, Roth makes the first of two devastating comments to Ike in "Delta Autumn," asking him "'where have you been all the time you were dead?'" (p. 345). Yet it is the black woman, extending Roth's question, who forces us to see Ike's plight. "'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?'" (p. 363). In the name of moral commitment Ike's repudiation turns out to be a repudiation of life and love, first with his wife (pp. 314-15) and thereafter with all mankind. He fails to project himself into life, to open himself up to a future, whether this be of mythical repetitions or historical progress, and he is condemned to merely dream of the days of "better men" (p. 345). The apocalyptic world of "anonymous communal brotherhood" eludes him to the very end, and he finds himself sending the black woman away proclaiming that the time is "not now" (p. 361). He gives her Roth's money and old General Compson's powder horn (pp.
362-63) as a token of her belonging and as an unspoken, half-realized admission of his own failure to complete the McCaslin myth. Ike has sought peace beyond the conflicts of experience and found only obliteration. Far from dead, the black woman and her child live on, as the McCaslin myth lives in them, with her strength in her love.

Ike's repudiation, reverberating throughout the family/culture, stands forth to demand moral judgment. One must not, however, judge motivations here, only implications. Lucas's emergence into archetype, the inverse result of Ike's retreat, preserves the conflicts that trap Roth and reveal Ike's prejudices. Ike's apocalypticism reasserts the desire for self-preservation, based on the negative actions of repression and exploitation, that marked the cultural icon. The ideal of purity (racial, sexual) ironically results in a restrictiveness that denies passion, procreation, love, and humanity. Thus Roth's fall is into promiscuity with its threat of chaos. Roth's chance for a truly revolutionary defiance of the family/culture myth, through marriage to the black woman, is forfeit under the terms of his own heritage, and he is not able to erase those terms. It is a revolutionary option Faulkner confronted frequently in his works, never without anxiety.

FORGING THE NOVEL: A GRAMMATICAL MODEL

At this point I hope the reader is at least predisposed to admit that myths enter literature in rather complex ways. To be sure, they provide fragments of meaning in the allusive surface of the work and are displaced into narrative structures, but often they are used in a more integral manner. The process is similar to what Jacques Derrida calls "deconstruction." This is neither the creation of a new myth nor the destruction of an old one; deconstruction, seen as a "literary strategy," involves simultaneous countermovements, distinct yet mutually dependent.

The first of these movements is "démystification." One primary effect of deconstruction is to undercut the tendency of mythical thought to assert itself in an aloofness from immediate empirical reality. The artist forces the objectified or "subsistent" mythical theme-structure to emerge in the living, experiential world, to "accommodate" itself to "reality." Myth ceases to
belong to the supernatural and the abstract or to purify itself as contentless, deep structure. The process draws myth down to earth, scandalously making it speak to individual human experience. Demystification, however, exists only in opposition to a countermovement on the empirical level. There, the merely familiar, habitual, unnoticed flow of experience is raised to the foreground of our perception; the familiar is "defamiliarized," made distinct or "strange" in an activity parallel to what Piaget calls "assimilation," with its set toward "repetition" and "typicality." Both defamiliarization and demystification are positive movements, giving to the sequential, metonymic narrative its metaphoric tendencies and symbolic suggestiveness. Like the operation of Kant's aesthetic judgment, which is neither pure reason nor pure sense experience, the deconstruction of myth is neither the surrender to the infinite surplus of familiar experience nor to the surplus explanatory power of gnostic orderliness.

Faulkner's use of myth makes him an ideal representation of what Roland Barthes calls the "structural man," whose creative act is a double process like the one I have described: "decomposition" then "recomposition" or "dissection" and then "articulation." But most crucially, deconstruction drives at the symbolic basis of mythical thought; it is a radicalization of myth in the sense of Paul Ricoeur's claim that: "symbols are more radical than myths. . . . Myths [are] a species of symbols, . . . symbols developed in the form of narrations and articulated in a time and space that cannot be coordinated with the time and space of history and geography. . . ." Deconstruction, however, does not simply yield a discrete literary or aesthetic symbol that is merely suggestive of reality. Nor does demystification produce fragmentation: the scandal is not atheistic but is, at worst, agnostic. The act of radical articulation creates distinctness without alienating "unity" or "form." According to Barthes, form "is what keeps the contiguity of units from appearing as a pure effect of chance: the work of art is what man wrests from chance"; it is "a kind of battle against chance." The artist's articulation raises the particular to distinctness, gives "meaning" to experience, and forces the merely empirical dimension of reality to emerge into formal presence.

The key word here, of course, is "meaning," and my funda-
mental assumption is that meaning arises only in the act of articulation where it shows itself as a composite of form and experiential content, and as the product of an individual voice. Perhaps a somewhat eccentric point of view, this reflects my conviction that it is better to see all abstract, contentless, logically consistent and anonymous discourse (whether this be philosophical thought or mythical deep structures) as meaningless until spoken to experience by a subject. With such an assumption a profound humanism is injected into the study of myth, literature, and philosophy, and the questions of the temporal and spatial, the historical and geographical dimensions of articulation are unavoidably raised. In his earlier work on myths Claude Lévi-Strauss seemed very much concerned with such an existential humanism, calling it "esprit"; for his effort he has been much criticized even by those who profess to be his disciples, but surely what interests us about myths is the "human mind" as it "shows" itself in its particularity and social being.

Articulation asserts meaning as both individuation and collectivity. The following syntagmatic chain depicts a familiar form of utterance, wherein the symbols A and B represent wholly meaningless slots that have, nevertheless, relational, logical, or grammatical functions:

(All) A's are not B's.

What particular signs we can substitute for A and B depends upon the interaction of three variables (rules simplified here to fit the present discussion): (1) the position of the slot in relation to other slots, (2) the culturally available items that form a class of permissible substitutions, and (3) the occasion, or spatio-temporal context, of the articulation, the by and to whom, for what, when, and where of the speech act. The process of selection and substitution, the paradigmatic function, is remarkably complex, having to satisfy a number of variables at one time.

Apropos of Go Down, Moses we might make the following selection/substitutions:

(All) bears are not men.

If the paradigmatic act satisfies all of the variables, is consistent with universal laws of ordering, cultural classification, and
contextual intention, the sentence will be meaningful. Meaning, therefore, implies the idea of "sanction" (decoding, interpretation). Sanction is not mere recognition of what has been said before or even of what could have been said before; meaning is neither mere grammatical regularity nor Truth. The idea of Truth, of course, is problematic; Truth is neither a fact nor an idea nor a statement but a convoluted relationship of all three. The Truth of any statement of fact is contingent upon "agreement" under the concept of "the Known," or Knowledge. The truth value of a statement is its propositional function, the subsuming of the statement under a general law; but not all meaningful statements are true in this sense, for they may articulate what has not yet been codified into Knowledge, what for which there is no general proposition or even what may appear to contradict the Known (hence, a Falsehood).

Meaning, however, results from the sanctioning of the articulation on the specific occasion of its utterance. Thus, for the average American schoolchild the statement "Bears are not men" is meaningful and True, although perhaps trivial in its empirical referentiality. The opposite, "Bears are men," is more problematic. It is clearly False, but that determination seems to rest on a prior condition that allows us to say that it is meaningful before we even test it for Truth or Falsehood. Clearly, such a statement is not trivial, and the sanctioned meaningfulness rests firmly on the ground of the occasion of its utterance, on a sense of factuality that is very complex. For example, when Faulkner gives to Sam Fathers the slang phrase referring to old Ben, "'He's the man'" (p. 198), the hearers, both Ike and the readers, must be aware of the context (occasion) and culturally operative cognitive systems that are brought into play. To some extent the statement echoes the earlier story "A Justice," in which much of Sam's heritage is related; some significant details of this earlier story are contradicted in Go Down, Moses, and, in fact, the idyllic view that Ike has of Sam's Indian ancestry is very much denied by the violent struggles for power that are revealed in "A Justice" where the forest world has been already corrupted through property (slave and land) ownership. This information is withheld from Ike in Go Down, Moses; it was Quentin Compson who listened to Sam's stories in "A Justice." The phrase "He's the man," however, opens this past to us as it subverts Ike's misapprehen-
sion of its meaning. In part reflecting black slang referring to the slave owner, "the man," the designation more specifically indicates old Ikkemotubbe, whose name "Doom" was a corruption of the French *du homme*. Doom had adopted this name as a designation of power, magic, as an assertion of his intention to become chief. It is this heritage that Sam applies to old Ben, the concept of chief through violent power that carries with it both grudging respect and some distaste. For Ike the statement in its contradiction of the mutually exclusive categories of his language and systems of thought, and in its transcendence of empirical factuality, begins a series of comparisons that eventuate in a metaphorical apotheosis of Ben. First, Ben is the unique bear who has earned a man's name and is more than animal; then, moving toward transcendence, Ben is a bear-man, hence, more than man; and finally he is a sacred, godlike creature, truly taboo. Ike allows the slang phrase to impute a rich, apocalyptic meaningfulness to Ben that would be impossible for Sam Fathers, and here in this simple, almost unnoticed phrase, Faulkner hints at the vast, unconscious, and unbridgeable gulf that exists between the worlds of these two characters.

Such a radical act of articulation forces us to see, as Barthes claims, "not man endowed with meanings, but man fabricating meanings," and herein lies the primary function of "literary discourse," which calls attention to itself as a meaningful statement, and to the act of articulation (the artist and his experiential context) as well. We might say, then, that all discourse ranges between the realm of pure, discontinuous experience expressed in grunts of satisfaction or howls of repulsion on the one hand and the realm of pure Knowledge expressed in profound nods and winks of recognition on the other. Grunts and nods, of course, are not insignificant, but they are weak discourse, "formulaic" communication, and it is the ideal of a strong, immediate, communicative discourse that dominates literature. This impossible goal leads the literary artist to test both extremes in his act of articulation. He must raise his statement of particular experience to the level of communication, out of the private into the public domain, but he must not lapse into the collective system of recognizable propositions if he is to preserve the experiential meaningfulness of what he says. The collective system would damn him to plagiarism, to the loss of
his voice, as well as the content of his statement, so that he says only what is sayable. The radical articulation of the writer, therefore, is neither anarchistic nor totalitarian, liberal nor conservative. Whether the act of deconstruction attacks myth, science, politics, or any other cultural structure of Knowledge, it preserves the possibility of structure in order to speak to experience. Similarly, it rescues experience from the dissipating outflow of energy in the flux of the elan vital, conserves energy as it isolates and foregrounds a fragment of familiar reality.

This concept of meaning perhaps plays havoc with our traditional sense of the term and should dislocate our most cherished critical assumptions about literature. In one respect it would seem to argue that all acts of articulation assert themselves as uniquely meaningful. Insofar as this would further destroy the shibboleth of literature’s privileged meaningfulness, forever banish such distinctions as those between the inspired creative madness of the poet and the cool logical reasonableness of the scientist, between nonreferential, organic literary discourse and referential, prosaic logical discourse, I am inclined to accept the consequences. But the definition of "meaning" I offer may have these consequences only with qualifications. The idea that all acts of articulation are uniquely meaningful sounds too radically atomistic, and it must be remembered that every articulation is circumscribed by a contextuality that makes possible the very act of meaningful speaking. The attempt to define this contextuality is the most crucial function of this book.

The atomistic fallacy of meaningfulness seems to me to be the fate that relentlessly dogs the heels of recent speech act theory and reduces highly technical arguments to purposeless quibbles. I have used the term articulation to preserve at least some of the sense of "performative" utterance as developed by J. L. Austin, but the utterance as act is meaningless in my sense when severed from a contextuality vastly more complex than either linguistic convention or explicitly expressible cultural rituals. If speech act theory is ever to be of use to literary critics (and Austin had no idea that it would be), it must be applied within a consideration of such a context. Even New Critical contextuality is not enough. It helps, of course, to read each individual statement in the context of a whole "work," but this ignores the fact that the work itself is nothing less than a complex statement within an
even broader context. This is not to say that the work as text has no limits; rather I would argue that such limits result from the performative or articulated nature of its being. The writer (or speaker) may consider his performance "over," completed—but such an ending (even when apparent to the audience like the fall of the final curtain) never proscribes the reverberating meaningfulness that exceeds that limited textuality.

If this is so, and I hope to demonstrate that it is, several old "certainties" about literary meaningfulness vanish. Meaning is a function, here, not merely of what is said (of "these words in this order") but in a peculiar way of what is not said. Meaning always remains hidden behind the text—or partly so—in the realm of language's and culture's systematicities, conventions, rules, myths, and beliefs. Our traditional concern with textual integrity becomes a trivial issue, though textuality, the "what" was actually uttered, remains as the focal point of meaning. Old theories of mimesis based on the referential nature of language must also be seen as subissues of larger questions concerning the referentiality of the text to broader systems of language, culture, and myth. We cannot even explore with contentment (if we ever did) the established issues of "point of view," for the reliability or unreliability of any fictional narrator/character remains clouded in the larger issue of the text's meaningfulness, in the dilemma of meaning dependent upon what is not said, on the silent term of meaning, the unuttered, unarticulated surplus of potential meaningfulness that belongs to linguistic/cultural systems.

To partly explain this problem I would like to call upon one unusual example. In his discussion of the "performative" actions of the "shaman," Lévi-Strauss hints that the "magic" of the shaman's performance results from a kind of balance that he is able to strike between too much and too little meaning. "So-called normal thought," he argues, "always suffers from a deficit of meaning, whereas so-called pathological thought (in at least some of its manifestations) disposes of a plethora of meaning." Through the shaman's actions "an equilibrium is reached between what might be called supply and demand on the psychic level. . . ." The "curative" or "magical" function of his performance comes in his adjustment of the two extremes, in his achieving a perfect fit between the myth/ritual's structural
potential for meaning and the seemingly unexplained event (the experience of physical pain, a chance happening or seemingly supernatural action). That is, the shaman brings into balance the forces of accommodation and assimilation; he speaks infinitely potential systematicity to the infinite plenitude of experientiality. I would not equate the literary artist with the savage shaman in simplistic terms, nor call literary creativity "magic" (although to do so would be neither distorting nor new), but I would argue that the fullness of literary meaningfulness, its balancing of system against experience, implies that meaning exists not in the circumscribed text or completed performance, but in the balance of extratextual elements. Meaning is found in the unexpressed fullness of the systems that remain behind as the ground of articulation itself in what Derrida calls the "trace." My definition of "meaning" here differs from that proposed by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. For Hirsch the meaningfulness of any text is arrived at through a process of narrowing one's focus, through the cutting away of "potential" meanings until one arrives at the meaning of the "intrinsic genre" or the work itself. My sense of meaningfulness, on the other hand, is radically inclusive; its very "validity" is that it is tentative, occasional, and essentially incomplete. At its best (I do not shrink from the value term), in our greatest literary works, meaning cannot be narrowly circumscribed, for it is neither normative nor pathological. It is both.

Some will object that such meaningfulness is too vague, elusive, even chimerical. Indeed it is, but not to the extent that it opens literature to impressionistic criticism; the text does not mean whatever any individual reader wants it to mean. The reverse is true, for my sense of meaningfulness militates against impressionism; a text means within its context and in relation to its occasion. Moreover, it thrusts beyond this historical relativism in its performative nature, by engaging the reader in the experientiality of its dynamic structure. The act of articulation is in essence a violence against both system and experience; it enlivens the former and tames the latter. Thus the paradigmatic function I have emphasized above is activated by a voice whose articulation is an assertion of being (or Heidegger's "being-there") against the anonymity of normative systems (linguistic or cultural) and against the indistinguishable flux of experiential plenitude. To select words, concepts, to force them into
meaningless slots in a syntagmatic chain, is to speak being meaningfully. But this is heroic, and artistic, only when the act, the selection and substitution, refuses to reduce particular items (words, concepts) to stereotypical deadening roles in the systematic structure and refuses to fracture the system into a plethora of atomistic parts, into the plenitude of nonsystematic experience. To resign ourselves to either extreme, to either the "beyond" of "nods and winks" or the "beyond" of "grunts and cries," would be to fall into "silence," into nonbeing, and to die. We would surrender to the noise of plenitude's buzz and hum or to the noise of the system's static.

It must be plainly noted, of course, that the activity I have designated as "articulation to experience" does not assert a simple referentiality in language usage, the idea of a one-way relation between a word and a thing in the world. Articulation to experience is an experiential event in its own right; its referentiality is comprised of the arrangements of things in the world and cultural/personal attitudes toward those arrangements (an idea discussed more fully in part 2 as "states of affairs"). Meaning is not referential but attitudinal (what Kenneth Burke in a most Kantian moment once called "the dancing of an attitude"), and it can be presented in three forms: (1) what an experience can mean, (2) what an experience is likely to mean, and (3) what an experience does mean. The first has to do with the logical limits of meaningful information available for communication. These limits are, practically speaking, infinite, and thus an experience can mean anything. That is to say, the articulation of an experience can convey information for what seems to be unlimited purposes; this expresses the function of language as total signifying system, as langage, the all-inclusive potential for meaningful articulation. The second presentation of meaning (the is likely) represents the cultural limits or designated limits of meaningfulness, or langue. This is the ghostlike system that defines, and is defined by, the elastic horizons of culture or subculture. All meanings are not always available in all systems of communication (cultures). This is the level of statistical predictability, but must not ignore the third level (the does mean) that calls attention to the individual act of articulation at a specified time and place, under the pressure of an occasion. This third level, or parole, evidences the struggle for identity and being
in the world; to be known for one’s words strikes against the cultural limitations of what may or may not be meaningfully articulated, and it can do so because of the unlimited potential or langage (which has been only conventionally repressed by cultural langue). Langage is a threat to langue as unrepressed desire is a threat to social order, but langage is also a threat to parole, for identity and being are cultural concepts. One comes to be, to have identity, only in culture, in langue, and this is the conspiracy of langue and parole against langage, against the infinitely potent meaningfulness that is timeless, placeless, anonymous, and meaningless.89

Because of this complexity we can say with Umberto Eco that “every human experience . . . can be translated into terms of verbal language, while the contrary is not true.”90 This he calls the concept of effability, but the term translated here covers a polymorphic activity ranging from the categorizing of particulars under general concepts to the expression of passionate desire for something. That an experience can be expressed meaningfully by exercising the potentiality of langage has nothing to do with whether or not the expression is adequate to existential fact; yet adequation is a function of the level of langue, expressing the idea that culturally predictable meanings are always adequate to experience since a culture permits only conventional meaningfulness (and by implication only conventional experientiality) to be expressed. This sense of adequacy may at times seem inadequate, which leads to the artistic struggle for the right word and the frustration at not finding it available, at the need to make the old word fit the seemingly new experience. Where desire for individuation is blocked by cultural adequation there is created the driving force of lack or need. At this point we move from what Eco calls a “rule-governed creativity” (the adequation of langue) to a “rule-changing creativity”91 (a conspiracy of parole and langage against langue). This is the opening up of unrestricted commerce and communication and the introduction of the idea of “intentionality” (towardness) into the idea of closed systematicity. The conspiracy is a powerful tool; it is the echo of anarchy and natural desire that must be repressed, and it is the scene, the situation, and occasion of art. Again from Eco, “It is indeed difficult to avoid the conclusion that a work of art communicates too much and therefore does not communicate at all,
simply existing as a magic spell that is radically impermeable to all semiotic approach." Here we have again the idea of too much meaning, which blurs the outlines of what an articulation does mean, but this is the essence of literary art.

It must be understood that this schema of relationships between langage, langue, and parole implies no hierarchy and does not define mutually exclusive categories. The function of langue is chimerical: to exclude (repress) langage (as anarchistic) and to show langage within itself. Thus there is no inside/outside distinction to be made here, for parole too excludes/shows both langue and langage, and langage is the very possibility of both langue and parole. To the extent that langue evidences (cultural) limits (limits of Truth), langue is a machine for producing meaningful truths, but the machine is blind to its own potential for untruths, blind to its own problematical status. Moreover, it is not technically correct to say that revolution comes from within the closed cultural system of such a langue, for it is the conspiracy of parole and langage, within and beyond langue, that gives rise to a countermovement, a new problematical structure. Any langue, as presented here, tends toward the status of an ideology or dogma; its very tendency to delimit Truth precludes the generation of a new ideology wholly from within the old. Change, revolution, and history, therefore, assume the form of a series of discontinuous eruptions. The more repressive any langue (ideology) becomes, the more the otherness within and outside it shows itself as the possibility for a wholly new problematical structure.

The complexity of these chimerical relationships also precludes the traditional view of literature as comprised of a special language outside normative language, as radically unlike normative language. Literature is the act of articulation that makes perfect use of language's capabilities, and, as neither normal nor pathological, exhibits language to its fullest. Here, it seems to me, is a definition of literature's privileged status more exalted than any yet proposed. No longer superior to either language or experience, not free from language's systematicities nor the infinite variety of lived experience, literature profoundly deconstructs what has been said as well as what might be said through the dynamics of demystification and defamiliarization.

It is possible, in this oscillation between demystification and
defamiliarization, to measure historical periods according to their relative cultural stability. Moreover, this sense of cultural movement has a precise structural parallel in the way that systems of literary criticism react to new works. As Claudio Guillén says, "Systems will tend, generally speaking, to absorb change and assimilate innovation... In this connection, the roles of critic and reader are important. Most critics... view a new work 'through' a system.... The critical intelligence 'assimilates' and 'accommodates' nearly in the sense that the psychologist Jean Piaget gives to these terms." The radical act of articulation threatens to disrupt the stasis by speaking the unspeakable, yet there are two sides to the temporality implied in the duality of deconstruction. One, at its extreme, is illusory since it captures change within the limits of permissibility; the emphasis is on defamiliarization, on the assimilation of experience to a communicable form. The best model for such change is found in contemporary linguistics, where alterations in the surface structure of language are controlled by "transformational-generative" rules. An extension of Saussure's "synchronic" linguistics, such a system emphasizes the static nature of its internal motion, for all apparent variations are "permitted" by the basic code else they are adjudged ungrammatical and, perhaps, meaningless. The existence of transformational movements and their essential regularity has been firmly demonstrated by Noam Chomsky, but a nagging question remains: why, under what imperus, do they occur? The laws explain how they operate but not why they operate. The answer is relatively simple and introduces us to the other temporality I have been at pains to describe. Transforms occur when an individual speaker at a specific time and place attempts to speak the general (generative) structure to particular experience. Here we reintroduce Saussure's diachronic dimension to language and emphasize the activity of demystification, the accommodation of system to reality.

The essential characteristics of the synchronic linguistic model have been brilliantly applied by Michel Foucault in his analysis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cognitive systems (in the fields of biology, monetary exchange, and theories of signification). He describes in The Order of Things fixed, synchronic taxonomic structures that arose within their specified
historical contexts and were solidified into Knowledge; that is, the structures have an operational validity in a given spatio-temporal milieu. Within their carefully defined limits the structuring powers of the systems permit certain regularizable speakings to experience, but as Foucault describes them, they do not necessarily derive from a universal core of thought nor do they arise out of previous structures. Moreover, the decay or decline of these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century systems takes place only under what we must see as a cataclysmic event. The emergence of new classificatory systems in the nineteenth century cannot be explained by an evolutionary movement, but only in terms of what Foucault repeatedly calls the “discovery of man,” a radically revolutionary shift in human thinking. As a historian of ideas Foucault gives us here a “general history,” what Claudio Guillén defines as a “succession of totalities,” or what Foucault himself calls a “series of series.”

The cataclysmic nature of the transition between discrete totalities, however, cannot be so easily ignored; the discovery of man surely betokens a reorganization of thinking that justifies extraordinary claims on the magnitude of Kant’s “second Copernican revolution,” and such is the very stuff of which history is composed. In part, a new mode of organizing implies a new awareness; old structures are fractured, even replaced, by radical articulations to experience, by speaking the unspeakable. The result is a new way of saying things and the constitution of a new reality, not necessarily better or more accurate, but, from inside the system, more immediately meaningful. The parallels in the languages of myth and literature should be obvious; at the base of any form of discourse, and any structure of Knowledge, is man’s impulse toward an experiential world, toward “life.” As Ernst Cassirer says, with acknowledgement to Humboldt, “man puts language between himself and the nature which inwardly and outwardly acts upon him; . . . he surrounds himself with a world of words in order to assimilate and elaborate the world of objects, and this is equally true of the configurations of the mythical and aesthetic fantasy.” The stability of discrete systems is always threatened by the recalcitrance and inexhaustibility of human experience; with the act of assimilation comes also that of accommodation—even to the point of a cataclysmic rejection of the old structure.
The self-reflexive temporality of synchronic structures, the illusory sense of change within the permissible limits of transformational laws reflects, perhaps, one basic human fact: man’s urge toward order, stasis, and the conservation of energy. The understanding of such an urge, particularly in its linguistic manifestation, spells the end of traditional linear, continuous history; for the literary historians it may provide a better means of getting at those elusive units we call “literary periods.” But the experiential dimension of man’s everyday life and its tendency toward discrete particularity are equally important, and it is here that literature, rather than the linguist’s finite generative grammars, might be the most significant model. The creation of a literary work is an act of presencing that proposes that work as an experiential object, but the act remains always a proposition, existing somewhere below the collective, all-consuming egalitarianism of the structure of Knowledge and above the flux and blur of sense experience. Literature fragments and vitalizes society, not anarchistically, not by plunging us into chaos, but by repeating once more man’s desire to make meaningful the world he senses around him. Literary history is, therefore, not linear continuity but the energy of continuous emergence, and such a history cannot ignore the personal elements of vision and style without at the same time denying collective order itself. As Émile Benveniste argues, it is by virtue of “the polarity of I:you,” the polarity of “I” and all “others,” that “the individual and society are not at all contradictory terms, but rather complementary terms.”

Furthermore, the author’s vision is a correlative of such literary categories as “style” and “structure.” In Go Down, Moses Faulkner comes face to face with the mutually dependent polarity of the two temporalities that I have been at pains to describe above: one reflecting illusory movement within the culturally delimited model of a transformational system, or langue, the other a radically expansive and open-ended expression that seeks to speak the unspeakable, or parole. The former, of course, manifests the conspiracy of langue and parole against langage; it spreads out the culturally sanctioned confrontation with experience as if across the surface of the page, giving the illusion of linear movement while it disguises the deep structure of the unarticulated (disguises the repressive laws of cultural limi-
tions). The latter, which manifests the conspiracy of langage and parole against langue, breaks through the surface to dwell on the endless potentiality of what is not articulated, thus risking exposure and violation of the repressed. This warfare of conspirators and double agents (notice the dual function of parole) is most easily illustrated in a work like Go Down, Moses by focusing on the grosser levels of structure, on plot, but we need to reconsider the term plot in ways unlike the traditional Aristotelian definitions of a causally arranged sequence of events reflecting the artist’s “imitation” of the “actions of men.” Plot is this and much more; fundamentally it is a juxtaposition of meaningful articulations to experience. To return to the syntagmatic/paradigmatic grammatical model above: plot is a certain relational sequence of selected incidents along a temporal axis. The axis is temporal not only when it is causal, when it imitates chronology, but also because it must be read sequentially. Plot has coherence, but not necessarily logical progression, and the coherence of a literary narrative is simply another term for meaningful articulation.

The plotting of Go Down, Moses demands our recognition of the discrete character of the stories, for it is the struggle of these units to break free of traditional narrative restrictions, to defy even the sequential motion of reading, that makes plot crucial to the sense of history Faulkner wants to present. So it is with the story “Was,” which institutes in the reader’s mind an ill-defined time-set understandable only in terms of the novel as a whole. The story is a complete unit, composed of its own arrangement of incidents, yet it belongs to a broader framework hinted at in the somewhat cryptic naming of the hero, Ike McCaslin, whose life is recapitulated in the first paragraph. The fact that the first story belongs to a history (Ike’s) reveals Faulkner’s narrative strategy and illustrates what I would like to call the first law of plot structure: that no narrative can be allowed to undercut the immediacy and independence of the incidents that comprise the narrative as a coherent whole. The parts are always more than the whole in the sense that the presence of an individual incident implies that there is more than what is being presented, that the making distinct of the individual experience necessarily results in a loss or blurring of contiguous details. It is here that we get the fullest sense of irrelevant texture, but this surplus also points up
the surplus power of the total narrative structure, the excess of explanatory capacity that suggests that the whole could contain more than it does. To speak of one of these surpluses is to speak of the other. The novelist's task, unlike that of the historian, for example, is to allow the rich particularity of the moment full sway in its battle against the totalizing powers of systematicity. The historian, confronting a multiplicity of details and perspectives, must always resist the explosiveness of the particular event; he chooses always within the prescribed limits of his structural assumptions, according to the discursive principles of his own half-perceived cultural schema. The novelist risks the danger of allowing his typified experiences to assert a life of their own and is faced with the disruptiveness of something like Ike's apocalyptic vision, which fractures coherence into a discontinuous series of discrete, "supermeaningful" moments.

Literary and historical narratives differ insofar as each demands a certain, peculiar "attitudinal leaning" from its reader. This has nothing to do with truth functions, but it does involve a distinction between explanatory and nonexplanatory systems.¹⁰² We might say again that historical narrative aspires (hopelessly) to the condition of myth. The historian selects from the myriad possibilities of events (or texts) a subset of such events (or texts) that "stands for" the whole.¹⁰³ It must seem to the reader (in a kind of optical illusion) that the narrative, based on the free transformation of the subset through endless permutations and repetitions, is adequate in its explanatory force to the period covered. This necessitates that the historian efface his personal voice so that it appears he is spoken by his myth/system rather than that the narrative is spoken by him. The historian's ideal is to be absorbed in the anonymity of his discursive system, to project the center of his narrative structure outside himself as other and assure his own absence from it.

The literary artist reverses the historian's drive toward self-effacement by insistently asserting his presence. But he does not do so by characterizing himself as narrator—as the express or implied "I" of his story; as Barthes claims "the one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is."¹⁰⁴ The matter of authorial voice or presence is vastly more complex than our traditional questions about point of view led us to believe.¹⁰⁵ The author's presence is
marked by his treatment of the narrative as "meaningful assertion" and not as explanatory system. The explanatory force of the historian's text, which subordinates the majority of particularities to the transformational unfolding, is corrupted by the literary artist's unpredictable expansion of particularities. That is to say, literary narrative seeks not to explain but to render meaningful. The reader is drawn into this engagement, into the questioning of meaningfulness, because the explanatory force of the narrative has been pushed aside—leaving in its place a pluralistic, dynamic text as meaning-event.

This is simply the sense we all share that literary narrative is freer than historical narrative, in its allowing the moment to distort the whole, but it is an illusory freedom at best. Barthes, speaking of narrative in general, characterizes neatly what I would call literary narrative in particular. "Form in narrative is marked essentially by two governing forces: the dispersion of signs throughout the story and the insertion of unpredictable expansion among them. These expansions appear as opportunities for freedom; nevertheless, it is in the nature of narrative to absorb such 'discrepancies' as a part of its language." This would seem to take away with one hand what is being offered by the other, but such is the problematics of the case. A balance is struck between the "discrepancies" and the regularizing flow of the whole in literary narrative, and this balance deflects us away from the explanatory function toward the meaning function. Literary narrative is full of gaps; to raise certain moments to disruptive prominence relegates others to an irrelevant background. Meaning resides tenuously in these gaps, both within and outside the moment, both within and outside the text as a compound of moments, as the imaginary locus of the balance between particularity and system.

The pattern of narrative writing that I suggest above has a remarkably wide currency in contemporary literary theory. There is no space here for an inclusive discussion of the study of "narratology," but several parallels might help clarify the central issues of my argument, issues not always treated with the same attitude by all commentators on narrative form. The pattern of linear flow and disruption can be expressed as the interplay of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic functions, of the metonymic and metaphoric poles, or simply as the idea of narrative digression.
However, digression, like the "unpredictable expansions" cited by Barthes, must be seen as rule-bound freedom; it is, perhaps, more like the assertion of the idea of freedom, a sanctioning of the narrator’s right to give the lie to normative ideology. The concept is at least as old as Homer, embodied in the character of Odysseus, whose prodigious talent for deception (lying) is closely allied with his unquestioned abilities as storyteller. Digression, as I want to use the term, is the revelation of the possibility of the "lie," which is precisely the problem with literature that so worried Plato: its power to meaningfully "say that which is not." Digression reveals that the surface ordering of a sanctioned meaningfulness (like the historian’s explanatory systematicity) is the repression of free play, the repression of the promiscuous interlinking of all possible meanings, of infinite meaningfulness (which bears the threat of nonmeaning and death).

There is much to indicate that excessive and self-conscious use of digression, which calls attention to a need/desire for order, reflects the artist’s sense of a fragmented world; this lends support to the efforts of theorists like Georg Lukács and Julia Kristeva to define the novel as the art form of modern fragmented social consciousness. On the other hand, the degree to which such digressions seem to be playfully indulged by an audience, as Odysseus’s stories are applauded and urged on by his listeners, may reflect a social stability or sense of belonging and cultural identity of a high degree. If we were to follow this set of ideas it would be necessary to devise a distinction between digression as rebellion against repression and digression in the service of repression (social order), but my interests are simply in the revelation of the pattern.

Roland Barthes has been mentioned already in this connection, but a closer look at his suggestive reading of a short story by Balzac in S/Z provides us with the clearest example of the narrative of linear flow and disruptive digression. Barthes’s approach consists in positing five "codes," or lexical elements, that uncover various narrative patterns. Of the five codes two are clearly linear and three are disruptive, or, as Jonathan Culler points out, two reflect Emile Benveniste’s concept of distributational functioning and three reflect Benveniste’s concept of integral functioning. Barthes’s "proairetic code," with its focus
on the sense of plot as "sequence," and his "hermeneutic code," with its emphasis on the formulating of questions and delaying of answers, are oriented toward linearity. The remaining three codes are: the "semic," which concerns signifiers that "create characters, ambiances, shapes"; the "symbolic," which is very close to the traditional sense of "sign functioning," providing "a vast symbolic structure" for "many substitutions"; and the "cultural," which marks a referentiality in the text to culturally sanctioned "knowledge or wisdom"; these three codes tend toward the disruption of linearity, toward the endlessly expansive digression on character (in the romantic-organic sense), on the overcoding of sign-function patterns that permits endless choices and substitutions, and on the opening of literary textuality to cultural (even mythic?) contextuality.110

In S/ Z Barthes emphasizes the act of reading and rereading; he emphasizes the multifunctioned nature of the text, but he does not emphasize the interplay of linearity and digression in quite the way I have presented it. Such a syntagmatic/paradigmatic interplay has been proposed by Tzvetan Todorov as the basis of narrative structure, and a recent study of narrative by Harold Toliver discovers similar patterns of interplay between horizontal and vertical motion.111 A. J. Greimas has also constructed a grammatical model of narrative dynamics that resembles a scaled-down version of the famous Proppian dramatic approach to the narrative structures of Russian folktales.112 The insistent linearity of Propp's thirty-one syntagmatic functions called forth, as a corrective, some greater emphasis on the paradigmatic function from both Greimas and Todorov.113 To be sure, the Proppian analysis with its diachronic, dramatic bias has come to be directly opposed to the synchronic, homological analysis of (mythical) narratives developed by Lévi-Strauss;114 together they represent the poles of a tension in narrative structure. It is, I would suggest, in the discursive unfolding of Barthes's practical analysis in S/ Z that we can best see the mediation of these two views, even if that is not Barthes’s primary concern.

As always, we are better able to examine this interplay through critical analysis than through abstract argumentation, and thus it has been one of the goals of this first essay to show that this pattern is the crucial organizational device of Go Down, Moses.
Nowhere, moreover, is it more clearly at work than in the seemingly inexplicable and disruptive insertion of the story "Pantaloon in Black" into the pattern of thematically related stories of the McCaslin family. This may be the best of all the individual stories; it is surely the most intense and economical in form and expression. Most commentators on Go Down, Moses have either ignored its relation to the rest of the novel or have connected it thematically, but few have accepted Faulkner's ironic claim that it was included merely to give his readers their money's worth. There is nonetheless some truth to this claim, for the story is an excellent example of the not-so-irrelevant detail of narrative form. Here Faulkner is at his descriptive best, as in the passage telling of the black hero Rider's struggle to lift a huge log.

He had done it before—taken a log from the truck onto his hands, balanced, and turned with it and tossed it down the skidway, but never with a stick of this size, so that in a complete cessation of all sound save the pulse of the exhaust and the light free-running whine of the disengaged saw since every eye there, even that of the white foreman, was upon him, he nudged the log to the edge of the truck-frame and squatted and set his palms against the underside of it. For a time there was no movement at all. It was as if the unrational and inanimate wood had invested, mesmerised the man with some of its own primal inertia. Then a voice said quietly: "He got hit. Hit's off de truck," and they saw the crack and gap of air, watching the infinitesimal straightening of the braced legs until the knees locked, the movement mounting infinitesimally through the belly's insuck, the arch of the chest, the neck cords, lifting the lip from the white clench of the teeth in passing, drawing the whole head backward and only the bloodshot fixity of the eyes impervious to it, moving on up the arms and the straightening elbows until the balanced log was higher than his head. "Only he aint gonter turn wid dat un," the same voice said. "And when he try to put hit back on de truck, hit gonter kill him." But none of them moved. Then—there was no gathering of supreme effort—the log seemed to leap suddenly backward over his head of its own volition, spinning, crashing and thundering down the incline; he turned and stepped over the slanting track in one stride and walked through them as they gave way and went on across the clearing toward the woods even though the foreman called after him: "Rider!" and again: "You, Rider!"
Faulkner dwells on the scene with such rapt fascination that it alone threatens to break free of the narrative flow. For an unmeasurable moment all motion is stopped, lingered over by Faulkner's play with words, concentrated into stillness yet containing the potential of a mighty eruption of energy. But the narrative, the force of temporality, pushes in again, opened by the short, breathless and quiet comments of an onlooker, whereupon the scene rushes to its conclusion.

A scene so powerful begs for interpretation. What does it tell us of the hero, Rider? Is it merely a demonstration of his strength? Does it express in physical action Rider's tormented drive for self-destruction, his agony at the unexplained death of his wife, Mannie? Does it depict the awful laughter of some deranged god who allows Rider to triumph here even though the grief-torn black man wants to fail, to have the agonizing breath of life crushed out of him? Is it a parable on existence, on the eternal struggle between the forces of life and death where Faulkner tips the balance ever so slightly in favor of the former? Perhaps the passage says all of these in varying degrees, but none exhausts its rich experiential value. The descriptive force draws the reader into the struggle, causes our breaths to suck in as Rider strains against the tree. It is, moreover, a quality that pervades the entire story and calls for our participation in the vitality of human experience without the effort of explanation. It is a virtuoso performance on the part of author and character that does not depend on the other stories for its effect; so far as we know, the time and place of the action is not specified and Rider's relation to the McCaslins or Sam Fathers is not given in the text. More or less instinctively we place it in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, and roughly at the time of "Delta Autumn," and we acknowledge the thematic congruence it has with the other stories of race relations. But little of this has any direct bearing on its affective strength.

Let me return for a moment to the passage of Rider's struggle quoted above. It concludes with the voice of the foreman twice naming the character, "Rider." That in itself may be somewhat surprising—because Rider is addressed by name and not by a racially pejorative term such as "boy." This is not to put words in Faulkner's mouth; the force of the passage, stronger than any other in the story, is to confer on Rider an identity so sharply
defined that it resists reduction to racial stereotypes. The passage, then, is descriptive of Rider's actions while it also performs for the reader a singular act of characterization. It takes on the feel of what we traditionally call poetry through the author's play with language. "Poetry" implies that an unusual attention has been given to words and structure themselves; every element of the poem's form is crucial, fixed, contextual. A poem is "these words in this order" and permits no alteration. To label this passage "play" or "poetry," however, is not enough, for what is at issue in the formula "these words in this order" is the degree of motivation revealed in the language, and Faulkner's poetic play in this passage demonstrates a shift in emphasis from relatively arbitrary selectivity to an intensely motivated performance.

The terms arbitrary and motivated I have somewhat roughly borrowed from Saussure, whose famous dictum on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign could have produced a theory of language as a multitude of discrete elements, a lexical chaos, if not restricted by some rule. Thus it is through the concept of "relative arbitrariness" that Saussure introduces into language study the idea of "system." The structure of langue has only a limited arbitrariness because of "associative and syntagmatic" forces that bind signs together into "bundles." For example, the Latin term inimicus is not absolutely arbitrary for it bears the trace of an elaborate class of signs through its elements, in and amicus. Inimicus, then, is very highly motivated through its syntagmatic bindings; the whole class lies unexpressed behind the expressed term.

To be sure, Saussure's thoughts on arbitrariness are ambiguous. Primarily concerned with the arbitrary relation between signs (words) and things in the world, Saussure seems also to see it is a factor in the internal relationship of the sign itself, as in the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, between acoustical image (sound) and thought content (concept). It is, however, the business of langue to repress the anarchistic force of the arbitrary (or langage). On the level of langue the relation between signifier and signified must be rendered "necessary" or "motivated."

Within the system of less arbitrary or motivated meaningfulness we must also take notice of the function of parole, of the act of choice. The term motivation here begins to take on a deeper
significance. The motivating force of *langue* is relative to general classes of substitutable items and the rules for their selection. It is the function of *parole*, sometimes in conjunction with the freedom (arbitrariness) of *langage*, to render the articulated poetic utterance with a much more intense sense of motivation—not the motivation of class substitutions but of particularities of experience. Ironically, at this level it is impossible to say whether the poetic utterance is radically motivated or radically arbitrary; it is a matter of perspective, a double vision that glances at the poetic passage simultaneously from inside cultural limitations (*langue*) and from outside such limitations (*langage*). What is revealed in this double vision is intentionality, not the actual thoughts of the author but the fact of his activity of choice, the fact of his articulation to particular, irreducible experience.

We are trapped once more in the obscurities of distinctions of degree, or, I would prefer, by the endless adjustments of an integral system. There is, therefore, nothing absolutely unmotivated about any particular act of articulation; hence Faulkner's description of Rider's efforts to lift the log can only be spoken of as more or less arbitrary. The key to understanding the passage comes to us only in the act of calling attention to motivation. That choices were made is obvious. But Faulkner moves from broad views of the scene in the hustle and bustle of the camp to the more specific details of the lifting of the log, to even further specificity in the infinitesimal details of arching chest and clenched teeth. The effect is to break the general descriptive scene down into smaller and smaller units, and to emphasize more and more the arbitrary nature of the author's choices—or at least to emphasize the vastness of details available for his choice. Most important, however, is a countermovement that arises necessarily from this breaking down. The pace of the scene seems to slow even as the details multiply; overwhelmed by particularities the reader begins to search for an orderly focus. At the point where such a focus should come, however, at the moment of balanced tension with the log held aloft, the reader is forestalled by the disrupting voice of an anonymous onlooker (who speaks breathlessly for us?): "'Only he aint gonter turn wid dat un.'" A turn will come, but at this unmeasurable moment of pause we find in the language of the passage a disturbing absence, a lack of a focal center that contains the opposing
forces within itself, the absence of a true metaphor to unite the multiplicity of metonymic particularities.

We get instead only the relatively impersonal third person pronoun "he"; yet the pronoun shifter calls our attention to what is missing: to the unexpressed motivation for the descriptive passage, and the tension of such a gap or absence is intolerable. The pause suddenly breaks open and the passage rushes to a conclusion; then, and only then, do we find the metaphor that we sought, but we find it outside the descriptive articulation itself. This belated fulfillment is very significant, for the focal metaphor could not be named in the passage without being reduced to the status of the other details, without becoming merely one metonymic detail among the others. Left unexpressed, it retains a fullness of meaning even in its absence, and we cannot avoid recalling here, by way of contrast, the weak metaphor of the phoenix dreamed by Ike as a banishing of all absence (time) through its magical presence. The container for the tensions of the passage, the unity for the seemingly endless details, can only be said afterwards in the name "Rider," into which name rush all the expressed and unexpressed details of the scene as a whole. Ike's phoenix metaphor does not work as an effort to deny absence; the naming of Rider as metaphor does not deny but recognizes the affective force of absence. Saying the name, of course, consigns all that explicitly and implicitly went before to absence, but the battle has been won. The name "Rider" has become radically motivated, allowing us to see motivation ambiguously as a matter of both character development and literary articulation. If it is true, as Eugenio Donato argues, that our Western culture has grown more and more obsessed with the idea that proper names are privileged signs that confer identity, the rush of the chaotic and relatively arbitrary details of the passage into the name, the replacing of the pronoun with "Rider," lends an intensity of identity to this particular character, confers on him an "authenticity," that nothing in the remainder of the story can efface.

Such authenticity, of course, is an illusion of linguistic utterance, not because Rider is a fictional character but because the idea of authenticity itself is illusory. The disruptive force of Rider's metaphoric naming functions as a paradigm for all assertions of being, for the winning of experiential presence out
of the anonymity of structural absence. This, too, is a philosophical and critical idea with a broadly romantic history. The idea of a privileged moment of being, of the arresting moment, the emergence of metaphor, is no more than a sense of "wonder" or "apocalypse," two characteristics already attributed to Ike's romantic turn of mind. Parallels can be found ranging from Kant's definition of the "sublime" to Cassirer's description of "momentary gods" or "mana-experiences," to Joyce's religious/aesthetic "epiphanies," to Eliseo Vivas's "rapt intransitive attention." Ezra Pound idealized the poetic moment in the "vortex," Wallace Stevens in the crystalline "fiction," and T. S. Eliot in the "still point." Confining himself to the level of style, Barthes has spoken of the "perverse" pleasure we receive from such a disruptive opening in the text, a kind of orgasmic rapture, experiential but unspeakable. Deep within us Jung located the "archetype" of a timeless, racial heritage, and Freud, perhaps most suggestively of all, defined the experience of disjunctive temporality as the "uncanny," the moment of the strange that is not strange in the midst of the familiar. Freud is particularly significant here because his sense of the uncanny can be read in a way that drives out the romantic argument that these moments are literally "unique," unrepeatable, and even ineffable. The essence of the Freudian uncanny is its recurrent patterning, its revelation of a repressed absent meaningfulness, yet it is never free of the aura of wonder, of the two much meaningfulness of metaphor, or of the paradox of the familiar (half-remembered) defamiliarized.

Thus we see that Rider's defamiliarization, though a singular act of parole that cannot be erased, calls attention to the very act of linguistic (and impersonal) substitution that allows us to put the "name" in the place of the pronoun. We are aware of the choices that not only relegate "he" to the stockpile of unused signs, but also negate culturally determined racial stereotypes such as "boy." That awareness does not come to us at the wondrous moment of Rider's naming but only in the course of the story itself; it comes with our growing awareness of Rider as a disruptive force infused into a cultural system of dehumanizing stereotypes. It is a profound comment on the rigidity of society that at the same time, in the textual violence of Rider's naming paralleled by the violence of his self-destructive actions, makes us
The Pilgrimage of Being

witnesses to the power and self-destructive violence of metaphor itself. Faulkner's articulation to experience, therefore, speaks the tensions of revolution or impending change. It is not prophecy so much as recognition again, here in this seemingly irrelevant story, of the internal tensions of the southern culture that we also see in the self-destructive repudiation made by Ike McCaslin and in the archetypal emergence of Lucas Beauchamp. Failure to confront this internal pressure for change, of course, will result in the dreaded invasion of the North; the corruption from within will unleash a corruption from without, the same corruption that Ike half perceives in the disappearance of the forest and openly fears in his discovery of the written ledgers.

The addition of the white deputy sheriff's monologue serves as a crucial counter-voice, as another failed interpretation. The deputy never engages Rider's story at the level of experience; he does not, as one critic notes, "recognize humanity when he sees it." The stupid insensitivity of his remarks angers us not just because they are racist, but because they also rob Rider of a unique, experiential being that we, as readers, have already granted him under the compulsion of Faulkner's language. The deepest level of interpretation—the radical level of articulated meaningfulness—defies the detached voice of a disengaged observer-analyst armed only with stereotypes and abstractions. The deputy's language fails him, for on the propositional level Rider's suffering, and his essential being, is silent. The reader feels the story come alive with meaningfulness as Faulkner draws us in through the "gestural" nature of his language, and the story's title calls attention to this dimension of literary discourse by reminding us of the conventions of mime performance where communication through physical movement challenges the hegemony of mere words. It demands dramatic participation, a hermeneutic engagement, that is not available on the level of conceptual or abstract Knowledge.

Here again we affirm the provincialism of articulated cognitive structures; the failed interpretation of the white deputy recapitulates the failure of Ike McCaslin to reinterpret, for his own romantic purposes, the totemic world of Sam Fathers. Myths are, then, nontransferable, and Faulkner, dealing with several myths in his novel, must not allow the readers to confuse them as his characters often do. Close attention to Faulkner's novel, to its
pattern of failed interpretations, should warn the reader and professional critic alike that it is not a structure but the potentiality of structure that is universal: the distinction is a crucial one. The linguist’s dream of describing a finite generative grammar that is universal,\textsuperscript{129} yet permits infinite variations in its manifestations, cannot be solidified into a sense of universal sameness in all human expressions. It is the meaningfulness of literary articulation that is proof against such a theory. Yet much of modern criticism, influenced by this very linguistic model of universal structure, has denied literature this function.

The result has been an overemphasis of the conservative forces of the structuring process. In the alliance of T. S. Eliot and Northrop Frye the dominance of “tradition” or the “dream world” of literary myth overshadows the “individual talent” or the uniqueness of the “displaced” monad.\textsuperscript{130} More recently John Barth has extolled the virtues of Jorge Luis Borges to define literary creativity as a kind of plagiarism, Robert Scholes, chary of the word “conservative,” has defined what he calls the “illiberal imagination.”\textsuperscript{131} As a corrective for the exaggerated emphasis on progressivism in twentieth-century philosophy, the trend is admirable, but it risks the opposite extreme by rejecting all philosophies of change and branding all versions of existential humanism as irrationalism.\textsuperscript{132} There is in this conservatism an irrational fear of irrationalism and the expression of a nostalgic yearning for simpler and temporally self-reflexive primitivism.

The old adage that all literature is about literature assumes a new and restrictive focus; for Borges the world of discourse (which is the world) is a vast library catalogued and ordered wherein one discovers the source of all possible utterances. It is an exhaustive system of permissible transforms reflecting, as John Barth says, every novelist’s desire to rewrite \textit{Don Quixote}.\textsuperscript{133} The fact that all fictions repeat other fictions to some extent, however, does not necessarily argue for Borges’s closed library. Even for the conservative Eliot, faith, universal stability, and Knowledge, the tradition of literature and Christianity, all had to be won in the articulation of his \textit{Four Quartets}, in the speaking to experience through his very personal voice.

In \textit{Go Down, Moses} Faulkner sets for himself no such task as Eliot chose in \textit{Four Quartets}. To prove the functional validity of a universal schema, to show its meaningfulness, is alien to his
vision where different worlds exist side by side in the same narrative. Thus, if one cannot return to the embracing wilderness of Sam Fathers, one is not necessarily condemned to the dissipation of energies in a chaotic world that defies meaningfulness. If anything, Faulkner depicts a world of surplus meaningfulness where general systems and discrete experiences abound. Lucas, Ike, and Sam are not part of one world but of a multiplex world, full of interactions and conflicts that threaten them all with the terrifying specter of discontinuity. Yet the narrative encompasses this diversity, not by regularizing it into a series of permissible transforms, but by allowing history to express itself in an elaborate pattern of emergences, each of which holds for its space against the violence of mere temporality. For Lucas and Sam the myths succeed in raising experience to meaningfulness even though neither exhausts empirical reality. On the other hand, Ike’s apocalypticism evidences the most spectacular failure of all, for he drags discrete experience out of temporality by fixing it in a timeless, mystical sacredness. Ironically, this thrusts him back into the discontinuousness of temporality; because he cannot live in time, cannot bring meaningfulness into presence in a “world” that “worlds,” his apocalyptic imagination, his egotism, fails to create for him the stability of being he so desires.

Ike’s overinterpretations are nowhere more clear than in his response to the fading McCaslin ledgers; these dusty volumes become for him a personal Bible, a holy book. To him it was as though the ledgers in their scarred cracked leather bindings were being lifted down one by one in their fading sequence and spread open on the desk or perhaps upon some apocryphal Bench or even Altar or perhaps the Throne itself for a last perusal and contemplation and refreshment of the All-knowledgeable before the yellowed pages and the brown thin ink in which was recorded the injustice and a little at least of its amelioration and restitution faded back forever into the anonymous communal original dust. [P. 261]

The ledgers are his Old Testament, the history of the McCaslins like the history of the Israelites and their captors. Old Carothers’s sin is the primal sin of Adam, and Ike’s Egypt is the South “cursed” by God (p. 298). This holy book, with its dialogue between the gospellers Buck and Buddy, infringes upon the mythical world of Sam Fathers, forcing Ike to see the wilderness as a new Eden and Sam as a new Adam.
In a very crucial way Ike's ledgers represent his enslavement by the written word. The inexorable logic of this text has the force of history, of metonymy, which in its orderliness strives for the condition of myth. We must not be fooled by Faulkner's teasing presentation of the information in section four of "The Bear"; the ruthless simplicity of Buck's and Buddy's dialogue is not a designedly elliptical presentation. It is a purified form of script, which notes events only insofar as they follow the cultural schema of the authors. The terror of these chronicles for Ike is in part this very starkness, the relentless movement of the pattern from which he finds no escape. Unable to alter the course of this text, he fears that soon his name will be the focus of its progress, that his hand will be drawn into the dialogue, into a continuation of the history he abhors. The result is Ike's dread of time, which the ledgers have reduced to chronology; he is a slave to prose unable to transform it into an autobiographical narrative, unwilling to bow to Lucas's mythicizing of the family history, but stained by it so that he cannot enter Sam's collective myth, which is spoken, not written, by the univocal voice of Sam and Sam's ever-present ancestors.

Most significantly, however, Ike's exaggerated interpretation reflects his own sense of a deep personal guilt; it is the manifestation of his romantic consciousness, similar to what Paul Ricoeur says is man's assertion of himself as "tribunal" of himself thereby bringing about his "alienation" from mankind. In Ike we observe not only "self-righteousness" but also the "curse attached thereto." Here the supreme "sin consists... in the vain attempt to justify oneself." As a result Ike comes to live on the fringes of society, not unlike the man-child Boon who belongs neither to the wilderness nor to culture, and whose end is presented to us as madness.

But Ike's position is instructively different from Boon's. Ike's guilt/fear of the family ledgers expresses his entrapment by the McCaslin genealogical myth, what we must call his subservience to it and to the cultural patterning (authoritarian, patriarchal, and racist) that it reveals. Such a pattern is undeniably Oedipal as it measures belonging (to race or family) by means of subservience (political or personal) to the master race of the (fore)-fathers. Regardless of his histrionic rebellion/repudiation, Ike is never able to break free from this myth; to do so would be too
frightening a revolt, and perhaps Ike’s failure unveils Faulkner’s own drawing back. Faulkner gives us, in his characters of racially mixed heritage, several openings toward a truly revolutionary cultural action, yet these characters never express a truly alternative culture. Lucas is absorbed into the genealogical myth, very much by his own choice, in order to function as its archetype. The child of Roth Edmonds and the black woman of “Delta Autumn” is literally ejected from the South, sent away by Ike himself. And Boon, whose time-innocence and arrested Oedipal development makes him the most promising anti-Oedipal figure in the novel, suffers a fate familiar to all of Faulkner’s readers; he is condemned to madness, to an antisocial status where his breaking of the pattern no longer threatens the pattern itself.135

Thus Ike’s solution to his dilemma is inevitably apocalyptic; he would write an ending to the ledgers, to the narrative text that is his (family and cultural) life, but his problem with endings has its inverse in the problematics of beginnings.136 He would have the renunciation of his heritage carry with it the renunciation of patrimony, even though this leaves him alone, able to assert himself as an “original original” only in a weak emulation of Christ. Time becomes his enemy, and he is submerged in a surplus of apocalyptic meaningfulness that is endlessly repeatable. Edward Said describes Stendhal’s romantic hero Julien Sorel in terms that seem also to fit Ike.

Such a character is hungry for the distinctions of more and more originality. His time is no longer the possession of the community, nor of the family man, but is rather an illicit dream of projected fulfillment whose high subjective purpose at the end is radically undermined at the beginning by refusals, the sacrifices, the renunciations, and the selfishness on which it is based. A life so lived is less an orderly biography than a series of collisions and compromises . . . ; this new private affair—especially when it becomes compulsive—substitutes irresponsible celibacy for fruitful marriage.137

It is very significant, indeed, that Ike neither begins (he is merely introduced in “Was”) nor ends the novel, for the detailed experiential reality of Faulkner’s fictional province is too much for his apocalyptic imagination. Thus the title story of the novel, the last story of the collection, defies his sense of endings; this story is what R. P. Adams calls “a contextual expansion of what
has gone before,” and it puts Ike outside the burgeoning life that Faulkner describes. Molly Beauchamp’s choral lament dominates the final narrative segment as an expression of her grief over the execution of her grandson, Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, for the murder of a Chicago policeman. Significantly, it takes on the terms of Ike’s confusion of the Bible and the McCaslin family history; Molly’s song, too, associates the black McCaslins with the captive Israelites and the white McCaslins with the oppressing Egyptians. “Roth Edmonds sold him. . . . Sold my Benjamin. Sold him in Egypt. Sold him to Pharaoh. Sold him to Pharoah and now he dead” (p. 380). Roth of course, had no direct responsibility for Sam’s death, but the song re-evokes the slave market morality established in “Was” as the system of exchange that supports the McCaslin myth, the exact terms that Lucas utilized in his assertion of mythical-archetypal presence.

The traditional spiritual from which the story’s title comes is a prayer for deliverance from bondage, for a new Moses, while it is also a defiant assertion of the slave’s sense of belonging to a “chosen” people. Here too the chanting of Molly and the other blacks reflects in its participatory function a sense of collective being that closes out others—most particularly Gavin Stevens and his world of practical concerns (pp. 380–81). Gavin is the last of the novel’s long list of failed interpreters stretching all the way back to Buck and Buddy McCaslin who fail to understand why the violated slave, Eunice, “drowned herself” (p. 267). Gavin’s efforts to keep the story of her grandson’s death from Molly are not merely futile but unnecessary, for Molly’s world encloses Samuel within its own mythical terms. Her reaction, which ignores the “facts,” becomes, then, not so much an act of foregiveness as an assertion of her own perfectly adequate rationale; for Gavin it is a puzzling dilemma that seems to say Molly “doesn’t care how he died” (p. 383). But that is only partly true. Molly’s acceptance reflects what Ricoeur calls a sense of “the ‘reality’ of sin—one might even say the ontological dimension of sin which must be contrasted with the ‘subjectivity’ of the consciousness of guilt.” The final story, therefore, also closes out Ike, whose subjective guilt condemns him not only to fail in his pilgrimage of being, to fail to find the promised land, but even, unlike Moses, to glimpse it. To borrow once more
from Ricoeur, Ike remains perpetually at the crises moment of human consciousness "after which myth and history are disassociated. Mythical time can no longer be co-ordinated with the time of events that are 'historical' . . . mythical space can no longer be co-ordinated with the places of our geography." Ike can neither move forward into history nor backward into the old myth; tortured by what Mircea Eliade called "ontological thirst," he finds himself, to paraphrase Lucas Beauchamp, excluded from the true benefits of belonging yet not free from the genealogical myth's heavy burden of responsibility.

ON METAPHOR AND METONYMY:
A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF "NOW" AND "THEN"

Faulkner's style, distinctive, daring, and powerfully affective, has often been discussed in relation to the recurrent theme of time in his novels, and there is an exemplary stylistic device of this kind in the repetition of the words "now" and "then" that contributes forcefully to the impact of Go Down, Moses. The former term (indicating a priviledged presentness that is also closely associated with the term "still," and thus indicates an absence of sound and motion as well as a continuous presentness) and the repetitive patterning of the latter (a parataxis emphasizing a disjunction between two successive points in time) are frequently used to counteract one another. The long descriptive paragraph quoted above where Rider lifts a heavy log from the lumber truck depends upon this balancing of movement and sound against stillness and quiet. The paragraph begins with two "thens" and introduces us to the busy, loud commotion of the millyard. The images raise the picture of random, though purposeful, movement, something like beehive or anthill activity. "Then the trucks were rolling again. Then he could stop needing to invent to himself reasons for his breathing, until after a while he began to believe he had forgot about breathing since now he could not hear himself above the steady thunder of the rolling logs . . ." (p. 145). But, as we have seen, Rider cannot forget, cannot diffuse his agonized being in the furious activity of sound and motion. The rolling logs reach a temporary end and he prepares to test his strength against the last one, doing what "he had done before . . . but never with a stick of this size. . . ."
effort not only seems to stop all motion but even to still the thunderous noise. "For a time there was no movement at all. It was as if the unrational and inanimate wood had invested, mesmerised the man with some of its primal inertia." The primal inertia brings us to a moment of equilibrium, and Rider stands in the center of everyone's attention, "in a complete cessation of all sound save the pulse of the exhaust and the light free-running whine of the disengaged saw..." The struggle between the opposed forces, however, is not really a total lack of motion as the pulse of the engine and whine of the saw show; here the descriptive force of Faulkner's style reveals the massive concentration of pulsing, straining, vital energy that may explosively erupt at any moment. There is, as well, no real pause in the forward movement of the prose. We have only the illusion of a pause created by the insertion of a simple short sentence, "For a time there was no movement at all," between a long, rambling sentence telling of exhausts, trucks, saws, and the crowd watching Rider and the contemplative restful "as if" sentence, which mesmerizes the reader with its abstract speculation about primal inertia.

The equilibrium of forces, therefore, cannot be long maintained, and the stillness and quiet of the vibrating moment are broken by the inexorable onrush of the narrative. Both sound and movement are reintroduced suddenly, but softly, in another "then" clause: "Then a voice said quietly: 'He got hit.'" The hushed, disembodied voice, seeming to feel that it violates the sacredness of the moment, is also prophetic, for it opens the way to movement once more: "The movement mounting infinitesimally through the belly's insuck." At first the progress is halting, "until the knees lock," and "until the balanced log was higher than his head," pausing again while "none of them moved," and finally erupting, only to be interrupted one last time by a negative phrase offset with dashes, but that cannot hold back the flow of temporality. "Then—there was no gathering of supreme effort—the log seemed to leap suddenly backward over his head of its own volition, spinning, crashing and thundering down the incline. . . ." The "then" clause violently reintroduces through the active verb "leap" and the triple present participles the busy movement and "thundering" noise that opened the paragraph.

There is a sense, as we have seen in the naming of Rider, that
metaphor is no more than a name we give to the idea of conserving vital energy in equilibrium. It is an absence that makes possible a presence, a unity that violently breaks itself apart. Here the metaphoric function of language rises to "stillness" and "nowness" out of and against the pull of metonymy, and in this tenuous assertion of presence, metaphor shows itself to be the stylistic expression of the philosophical idea of a centering archetype. Similarly, the emergence of Lucas Beauchamp finds its affective power through the interplay of metaphor and metonymy; it is this that gives Lucas's archetypal presence its crucial prototypical function, establishing through the play of language the extensive explanatory power of the McCaslin genealogical myth.

On the day of ritual confrontation with Zack, Lucas, the direct male descendant of old Carothers, appropriately waits for the woman-born McCaslin to come to him. "Then the light disappeared. He began to say quietly, aloud: 'Now, Now. He will have to have time to walk over here.' He continued to say it long after he knew the other had had time to walk back and forth between the two houses ten times over" (p. 51). Zack does not come, and Lucas's waiting for the sacred, archetypal "now" falls victim to the passing of time. "Then he knew that the other was not even waiting, and it was as if he stood already in the bedroom itself, above the slow respirations of sleep, the undefended and oblivious throat, the naked razor already in his hand" (p. 51). Jarred from his passive waiting, Lucas thrusts the "now" into a vision of the future; he must make that future a present; and when he does so, it will be as if he had already performed the ritual sacrifice (p. 52), an exercise of his "mythical memory." Yet the momentousness of that timeless "now" continues to elude him. "He was waiting for daylight. He could not have said why. He squatted against a tree halfway between the carriage gate and the white man's house, motionless as the windless obscurity itself while the constellations wheeled and the whipporwills choired faster and faster and ceased and the first cocks crowed and the false dawn came and faded and the birds began and the night was over" (p. 52). Only halfway toward the future "now," the universe whirls in mad, accelerating motion around him, but he has not yet earned the right to center the wheeling stars, to emerge from obscurity into archetypal presence. The syntagmatic
pull of the sentence jerks us forward in tiny fragments of blurred events linked only by a chain of “ands.”

When he enters the inner sanctum of Zack’s bedroom all is again silenced, but this is only the prelude to the “now.” The relentless series of “thens” continues. “Then he found the eyes of the face on the pillow looking quietly up at him and he knew then why he had to wait until daylight” (p. 52). He has come not to murder in darkness the man who stole his wife but for a ritualistic confrontation. He throws away his razor to equalize the oppositions, but Zack does not at first accept the challenge; “still the other didn’t move” (p. 53). Lucas knows instinctively what Ike never learns from Sam, that by possessing one thing other you possess them both. His emergence into being, the establishing of his identity, necessitates the active participation of “the other,” Zack. The scene wavers for a while between the two men. Zack enters the contest by retrieving his pistol from the drawer, but as he does so Lucas is momentarily stilled: “still Lucas didn’t move” (p. 54). Lucas attempts to provoke Zack into holding the gun while he rushes him, but Zack, too, knows the rules of equilibrated confrontation and tosses the gun on the bed between them. Suddenly, the to-and-fro play bursts into simultaneous action; a series of “then” clauses cascades around us. “Then Lucas was beside the bed. He didn’t remember moving at all. He was kneeling, their hands gripped, facing across the bed and the pistol” (p. 55). Locked in confrontation they kneel in reverence to the moment. “Then he cried, and not to the white man and the white man knew it; he saw the whites of the negro’s eyes rush suddenly with red like the eyes of bayed animal—a bear [!], a fox [the trickster] ... I was wrong, the white man thought. I have gone too far” (p. 55). “Then they did not move save their forearms, their gripped hands turning gradually until the white man’s hand was pressed back—downward on the pistol. Motionless, locked, incapable of moving ...” (pp. 55-56). Physically motionless, Lucas fills the moment with an extraordinary recapitulation of the events preceding it, almost as if he must be certain that the ritualistic procedures have been properly observed. “‘I give you your chance,’ Lucas said. ‘Then you laid here asleep with your door unlocked and give me mine. Then I threwed the razor away and give it back. And then you throwed it back to me’” (p. 56). The sacred “now” has not yet
come, the to-and-fro movement still dominates, but the time of the past few hours has been concentrated into the seconds of this speech, into another very rapid sequence of "thens." The moment, therefore, begins to draw the past and present into itself so that even in its finite, discrete, metaphoric timelessness it will be expansive and inclusive. The conflict is more than the confrontation of Zack and Lucas, or of two men, or of the "I" and the "other." Its context becomes that of the McCaslin history transformed by the power of language into the universal, identity-conferring conflict between master and slave, and not that conflict only in the sociological sense of southern history, but in the phenomenological sense of Hegel. The "I" and the "other" come to be only within the historical context, and this context, if we recall Benveniste’s insistently triadic model, takes shape only in the confrontation of the "I" and the "other." 142

Significantly, it is Zack, the "master," who must actively confer identity on Lucas, who must acknowledge the "now." "The white man sprang, hurling himself across the bed, grasping at the pistol and the hand which held it. Lucas sprang too; they met over the center of the bed where Lucas clasped the other with his left arm almost like an embrace and jammed the pistol against the white man’s side and pulled the trigger and flung the white man from him all in one motion, hearing as he did so the light, dry, incredibly loud click of the miss-fire" (p. 57). The rapid actions are here accelerated into what is almost simultaneity, centered over the bed in an embrace and concentrated into an instant of sound in the metaphoric click. Clearly a narrative foreshadowing of the statue-like culmination of the conflict between Boon-Lion and old Ben presented later in the novel, the reduction of time to a spatial point gives to the moment a ritualistic presence. But there is a crucial difference: the conflict of the hunt is typical and will be repeated again and again in actuality, whereas the symbolic marriage of opposites here will never actually occur again; it is the opening of an absence, the making of space for an archetype that is "summary" or functions only as prototype to be imitated. Even here, of course, the metonymic pressures of the prose defy a true stopping of time; the concentration of motion into the click is achieved by a stylistic illusion, first in the not wholly convincing claim that all of this happened in one motion, and more effec-
tively through the violent hiatus in the narrative that follows this passage. There is, after the "miss-fire," an open space on the page, a graphic stillness or absence, which announces a radical time shift out of the flashback sequence. Before being plunged back into the world of time, where images of revolving seasons pass quickly before our eyes, we are suspended in the blankness where a metaphor should be, in an absence where the magic word goes unwritten yet, like certain arresting sounds that even when no longer heard seem to linger in the mind, which word silently holds our attention. After this moment a metaphor is written, in the "cartridge" from the miss-fire, but the metaphor's graphic presence takes its force from the absence that made a place for it in the text.

When we confront the metaphor as written, therefore, we cannot forget that the scene of symbolic marriage between Zack and Lucas grows out of a tradition of exploitation and eternalizes it. The master/slave relationship of Zack and Lucas undergoes a violent reversal in the struggle. The dominant white partner Zack is provoked into action only to be suddenly forced to undergo the passive marriage role of the female—as the woman-born McCaslin. The reversal is crucial if Lucas's archetypical presence is to contain the essential conflicts of the McCaslin heritage, and Lucas gains not only an identity here but also a position of unquestionable (male) dominance, exploiting Zack for his own satisfaction (it is Lucas who fires the pistol) then roughly flinging him aside. This action reveals the power of the archetype, which continues to exercise its repressive force over the other descendants of Carothers McCaslin, over Roth and Ike, for belonging necessitates an acceptance of the conflicts and, hence, an acceptance of Lucas. Lucas, therefore, carries with him not only the past but extends the forces of the McCaslin myth into the future. He is the keeper of the McCaslin "icon": "the live cartridge, not even stained, not corroded, the mark of the firing-pin dented sharp and deep into the unexploded cap—the dull little brass cylinder less long than a match, not much larger than a pencil, not much heavier, yet large enough to contain two lives" (p. 58).

Out of the world of merely familiar items, pencils and matches, this small cartridge has been infused not merely with two lives but with a family/social heritage. The bullet, so
common an item in this novel filled with the violent but ritualistic world of hunting, has been defamiliarized into metaphor. Unexploded, its conserves the energy of conflict unspent, concentrating into itself the polysemantic, multi-experiential world of the McCaslins and Faulkner's South, closing out the totemic world of Sam Fathers. It is the radical symbol of another mythical world, a world of repression, exploitation, racial conflict, and self-destructive idealism, all manifest in the narrative of Ike's family, which speaks to a dead god, not the god of Christian myth nor the deer totem of Sam's tribe, but to old Carothers. Appropriately, Lucas himself acknowledges this deity: "'I needed him and he came and spoke for me'" (p. 58). The symbolic cartridge, articulated in the click, asserts the power, limited but essential, of metaphor to do battle against the metonymy of prose and the randomness of change, but as it does so it extracts from those who would belong to the myth of the McCaslin family commitments that are harsh. These commitments Isaac McCaslin is unwilling to make, although in his retreat he fails to find a better world comprised of better men. Perhaps, too, we must see the world of Sam Fathers as in its own way equally harsh, for it makes demands to which Ike, alien to its mythical terms, cannot accede, although he is willing. Caught between these two worlds, he is a man without a history, feebly projecting his personal apocalyptic visions on experiences that defy his thrust toward order and stasis. So, then, he becomes a paradigm of the modern, ahistorical, and uncommitted existential man, but although Faulkner's vision of true historical meaningfulness escapes Ike, it does not escape the reader. Faulkner's novel is, certainly, neither history nor myth, yet it strives to give us an immediate experience of the force of each working its way through our daily lives. It is a vision of history to which only the capabilities of a literary language are adequate.