Squirrels, Timber, and the 'Ecological Self' in Faulkner's *The Bear*

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ABSTRACT

Reading William Faulkner's "The Bear" with a literary ecologist perspective could shift readers from abstraction to ethical responsibility. Deep ecology, ecopsychology, and constructionist views of human development align with ethical criticism and ecocriticism to establish the basis for what Freya Mathews refers to as the "Ecological Self." Mathews joins others in noting that human development must become ecologically self-aware—a state engendering emotional, ethical responses, confirming wholeness and sustainability rather than mere intellectual, theoretical acknowledgment, or worse, pathological denial. Literary ecology joins textual analysis and meta-textual information to affirm the story's implied stewardship, despite Faulkner's sometimes unclear, tragic view of his landscape. An optimistic ecocritical reading affirms, or surpasses, various critical approaches often used with the story—in particular, the paradise myth. Reading ecocritically affirms individual health and sustainability with human culture and nonhuman nature. (KH)

KEYWORDS: deep ecology, ecopsychology, Faulkner, literary ecology, paradise myth

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> "There is no landscape like the landscape of our childhood."
>
> V. S. Naipaul

> "Any fool can destroy trees."

John Muir

An ecocritical approach to literature and the construction of being

William Faulkner's well-known story "The Bear" offers an informative case-study that demonstrates the value of an ecocritical approach to literature. The fable poignantly reminds readers of the need to develop what Freya Mathews calls an "ecological self." Reading "The Bear" as a document of literary ecology demonstrates its continuing relevance for anyone concerned about contemporary environmental issues. More than a masculine adventure story, an ecocritical reading points to a communal link between human readers and nonhuman nature. There are several informative streams that flow into becoming an ecologically self-realized, ethically responsible reader. In addition to textual analysis of the immediate story within its context of the novel *Go Down, Moses*, meta-textual considerations also become important, such as Faulkner's personal view of his landscape, references to contemporary environmental concerns, along with various social, philosophical, and psychological voices regarding formation of identity and motivation. Various constructionist views of human development connect also with a close association of deep ecology (see Theodore Roszak, Susan Rowland, Joseph Dodds, and Timothy Morton) that further an argument for the individual and collective need to overcome pathological detachment that emotionally separates readers from their actual environmental contexts. Several critical approaches used to interpret this story, most commonly the mythical, are either confirmed or surpassed by the contemporary need for an activist reading, such as ecocriticism demands. Literary ecologists, including Lawrence Buell and Scott Russell Sanders, make direct reference to Faulkner's ecological stance, or lack thereof, and ecocritical scholars including Cheryl Glotfelty, Scott Slovic, and Karen E. Waldron along with Martha Nussbaum in her ethical criticism emphasize that literature should go beyond academic discussion to invoke a moral response

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within the human, ecological self, affirming partnership with nonhuman nature. Each of these streams contribute to Mathews's sense of a "self-realized, ecological self" in suggesting that Faulkner's protagonist, Ike McCaslin, fails in his opportunity for stewardship with his inherited landscape. This refusal to be ecologically responsible helps establish the limits of mythical criticism for this story. Considering these various streams, it becomes apparent that abnegation of environmental responsibility takes a toll on the individual as well as a communal effect on all life, including nonhuman nature. Moreover, given today's environmental crisis, which was occurring, but with less publicity, even in Faulkner's day, an ecocritical reading offers hope for replacing fragmented, inoperative, or dormant notions about a text with heart-felt motivation and actual response for life-affirming sustainability. Finally, an ecological reading of "The Bear" demonstrates the potential to blend reader and text into a whole functioning, responsible steward of Earth's natural resources.

With ecological awareness, readers are drawn to the story's final scene, not only for its textual significance, but also for what it portends beyond the text. In this scene, Boon frantically struggles with a malfunctioning gun under a solitary gum tree overloaded with squirrels. His frustration symbolically dramatizes a society that destroys what it loves and starkly contrasts with the killing of "Old Ben"—the legendary bear. Boon's involvement in both the final scene with the squirrels and in the killing of the great bear several years prior reflects a diminished wilderness now reduced to a handful of trees, signifying a passing of time and a way of life. As the story moves toward its resigned ending, Faulkner's protagonist takes one last nostalgic walk in the place where his identity was first formed, apparently across the grave of his wilderness-father-figure Sam Fathers. On this walk, McCaslin witnesses Boon's delirium, the final, enduring commentary from the story. Earlier we learned that McCaslin has refused to claim the land of his boyhood for his inheritance, denouncing his past association with it. His dramatic act of relinquishing the land, however, has allowed a

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timber company to deforest the once-cherished woods. That act of relinquishment (Faulkner's term) has directly contributed to this final, confused, almost surreal panic of a would-be hunter desperate to kill something. Agonizing in his furious plight to control what little wilderness remains, Faulkner's story ends with Boon's ghastly warning to Ike: "Get out of here! Dont [sic] touch them! Dont touch a one of them! They're mine!" (331). Those words, that scene, encapsulates much of what is wrong with Americans and their possessive yet destructive relationship to wilderness.

This sordid ending to the story is the inevitable outcome of McCaslin denying his formative sense of self. In contrast, literary ecologists recognize an essential human need to develop a vital, respectful and enduring relationship with landscape, even wilderness.[1] To that end, Mathews, in particular, asks that we develop an ecological self, that is, an identity submitted to the ecology of our planet, an awareness that literally informs and constructs one's sense of self. In seeing the world through the eyes of an ecological self, we may more naturally find the courage to respond to the call of stewardship of earth in creative ways and with renewed effort. This renewed vision includes how we read familiar, influential texts.

As is often noted, many twentieth-century thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and George Herbert Mead emphasize that the notion of a human self is, in fact, a construction developed over time as one interacts with and reflects upon the influence of others encountered in social situations. Sartre, for example, claims that at birth, one has life but not being. Being is constructed as a result of interactions with others. He asserts that individual identity is a conceptual figure that evolves through experience. Over time, human consciousness begins to reflect the influence of others as humans develop a self: "The Other teaches [us] who [we are]" (366). Mead, also recognizing that the notion of human self is constructed, claims that "the self . . . is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience" (qtd. in Strauss 217). Even as children, he believes humans gain much of their

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identity through their discovery of established roles while playing games. In such games, one understands the expected responses of others who are also playing roles. In the interaction, then, an individual's sense of self is developed within the expectations of the community with which one is involved. Mead concludes: "a person is a personality because he belongs to a community, because he takes over the institutions of that community into his own conduct" (qtd. in Strauss 235, 239).

Beyond Sartre and Mead, a variety of thinkers connect a constructionist development of the self to ecology.[2] Roszak and Mathews, in particular, contend that human social/psychological development necessarily requires an ecological sense of self. Even if an *a priori* view concerning development of human identity were to be considered, still one must integrate a sustainable sense of the wild into his/her socialization and economy. It would be awkward, at best, to argue *a priori* that the blueprint of the universe anticipates human life only to be naturally ignorant of, and at odds with, the ecosystems of the universe that precede and provide life. Dodds asserts, "We are not yet at the point of emotionally being able to clearly grasp the threat, and act accordingly" (27)—we are reluctant to develop an "ecological self."[3]

"The Bear" offers more than a traditional *Bildungsroman*, but the formation of its principal character, Ike McCaslin, is at the heart of the story, if not the entire novel.[4] Clearly his identity is formed by the community with whom he socializes.[5] The annual hunting camps function as intensified game-playing rituals, and in these social contexts the boy receives the approval and other kinds of interaction from a variety of men who also participate in these annual experiences.[6] Beyond the people involved in Ike's development, the ecological context also is formative. The boy lives with "an unforgettable sense of the big woods—not a quality dangerous or particularly inimical, but profound, sentient, gigantic and brooding, amid which he had been permitted to go to and fro at will" (175). When the full context of Ike's life is

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considered, from his earliest days as an impressionable boy learning to hunt under the tutelage of the venerable Chickasaw, Sam Fathers, to his dying hour as an aged, curiously detached symbol of impotent patriarchy (365), his conflicted identity is prominently on display. His identity results not only from his boyhood hunting adventures, but also from a profound and humbled connection to an inherited landscape that he eventually disowns. This full context of *Go Down, Moses* establishes the close society of human and nonhuman interaction that molds his character. Later, his defining act of refusing to take ownership of the wilderness that shaped most of his young life, and therefore by default allowing the deforestation of a place he once loved, leaves him vulnerable to the charge of one who "turned apostate to his name and lineage" (39). The psychology of this radical shift, a denial of hard-earned identity, is fascinating on several levels. It is especially informative from the perspective of a literary ecologist, for in his relinquishment the land is left vulnerable to exploitation.

The five-chapter structure of "The Bear" provides the breadth of time necessary to understand Ike's decision. Chapters 1-3 render an adventure story, climaxing with the killing of the great bear.[7] Chapter 4 reveals a long, introverted response that Faulkner connects to the hunting tale. But how exactly is it connected? Rather than dramatically presented, much of the content is reflected, and as such, it posits Ike learning to understand himself within a racist culture. He discovers the shameful truth of his ancestry, and it is troubling to him to recognize his familial ties to slave-holding. In this section where the term "heart" frequently recurs, Ike comes to the heart of his own conclusions about himself and his heritage. He doesn't have the heart to be a racist. This reflection builds upon the previous three chapters that show him a willing but finally less-than-heroic hunter of Old Ben. He doesn't shoot the bear when the opportunity presents itself (284), and this memory of inaction—of refusing to kill—shapes him and follows him into his later years in contrast with his skill as a deer-hunting woodsman demonstrated at an early age. In his later contemplation, the killing associated with the annual

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deer camp rituals is part of the culture of those who would conquer and who would control even the human by enslavement to the privilege of those in power.

"The Bear" does not end with this reflection but with chapter 5, in which Ike stands by and watches the timber that he was to inherit fall into the aggressive hands of a lumber company. In other words, the mythical woods of his upbringing, the place of ritual where he was inducted into the clan, the wild space where he became a man is now literally disappearing. Only his memory remains as he takes one last walk into the woods. At this point readers realize the consequences of inaction: Ike's refusal to protect this place suggests his impotence and may be said to represent the modern response to industrialization.[8] Ike's dwindling influence makes for a memorable story despite its pathetic conclusion. The story leaves readers with a very real sense of what might have been. The inaction of Faulkner's noble protagonist begs for an activist reading that contrasts with the furtive, futile anti-hero paralyzed in clumsy reflection.

The three epochs of "The Bear"

Three distinct epochs are discernible in "The Bear": 1) the legend of primal origins of the woods, a woods that no one owns; 2) the institutional usage governed by Major de Spain and his privileged companions who wield power over and within a structured caste system; 3) the modern, which is depicted by the eventual demise of the land at the hands of the logging company. This tripartite movement occurs with fading echoes of former days before its passing. Truly memory is powerful in this story, but its power lies primarily in remorse and futile acquiescence. An ecological reading accounts for this troubled, heart-felt demise so obvious in Faulkner's work, but it goes further and rescues the story from the pathos of longing for what might have been.[9] Instead, an activist reading offers a vision of what can and must be. These three epochs correspond to three types of self, presented in the story. First, a

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primal self represented most prominently by the Chickasaw presence. Frequent allusions to Ikkemotubbe suggest a time before Major de Spain or General Compson gained control.[10] Second, there is the temporary, institutional self managed and enjoyed by the landed gentry who once a year go to deer camp deep into the woods where the gentlemen temporarily become one of the boys, but the place is ultimately marked by the caste system. The southern dispensation of arrogance toward others and the environment is never far from Ike's reflection. Finally, there is the disillusioned and disconnected self, signified by intrusive mechanization and represented by the reflective Ike who "repudiates and relinquishes" his participation in the rituals having occurred in the *place* of his youth. These three representations of self may be considered in relation to the overall notion that human identity is formed within social events and encounters with others, yet each is insufficient. Especially when contrasted with Mathews' emphasis on meaningfulness (147ff), readers have little to conclude except that the long saga of Ike McCaslin ends in frustrated acquiescence to disturbing circumstances as he surrenders to a pathetic life void of meaning.

Mathews contends an "ecological self" is a life of Self-Realization punctuated with meaningfulness where humans have a "special responsibility . . . to add our affirmation to the universal conatus" or striving to persevere in oneself (conatus as defined by Spinoza. Mathews 160-61). The "real work of conservation" she writes, involves "cultivating in ourselves the unrestricted will-to-exist, the spirit of pure affirmation, the wellspring of 'love' that creates and perpetuates the ecocosm" (159). The sensitive and holistic ecology of Mathews empowers readers to form their own sense of self, in particular, as it encounters juxtapositions of fiction that draw life from a real social and ecological context, such as Faulkner's Mississippi wilderness. This living and ongoing sensitivity to the ecological context enriches the reading of the story, providing dynamic levels of interpretation and response that myth criticism interrupts.

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Often "The Bear" (and the whole of *Go Down, Moses*) has been read through a mythological lens.[11] Sometimes historical and/or cultural frameworks are also employed.[12] A mythic reading can be especially powerful since it taps into the sense of human existence as participant in a fallen, tragic worldview. In the process of his withdrawal, Faulkner's introspective protagonist understands the land to be cursed (286). Irving Howe, Wendy Faris, and John Lydenberg are three among many who recognize "The Bear" as an American version of the paradise myth. Faris and Howe, in particular, emphasize the futile stab at virtue in the act of Isaac McCaslin's relinquishment. Faulkner's conflicted protagonist says "[the land] was never mine to repudiate" (256). Nor does he believe it ever rightfully belonged to any of his ancestors, nor even the ancient Chickasaw Chief Ikkemotubbe, because "the instant Ikkemotubbe discovered, realized, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing" (257). This echoes the first page of the novel where the narration explains that Isaac "owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man's but all men's, as light and air and weather were" (3). So part of his reasoning for relinquishing his claim to the land is steeped in a primal sentimentality long past, though admirable. The noble reasons for his withdrawal are subdued and absorbed by the tragic nostalgia for a wilderness, a paradise that can be no more, along with an attempt to expunge evil for which he is not responsible.

As enduring, and endearing, as a myth reading may be (and even if one contends that Faulkner, himself, understood his cursed, fallen world in mythic terms), it finally remains incomplete whereas an ecocritical reading allows readers not only to understand the history, culture, and myth involved in Faulkner's fictional world, but also connects readers to contemporary social and ecological problems.[13] One feature of ecocriticism remains constant: an ecocritical reading of literature (and literature may be broadly considered) involves an active response of readers. Most working definitions within ecocriticism offered by literary

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ecologists tend to be functional more than theoretical. Karen Waldron's emphasis on awareness of the natural world and threats to its sustainability, for example, is vital if one is to develop an ecological self. Both Roszak and Mathews, from psychological and philosophical bases, respectively, stress the cultural deficiency so common today. They point out the failure to be fully aware of the rhythms in nature as well as our limited understanding of ourselves due to our infrequent and misguided intercourse with nature. An insightful hermeneutical means of reading literature combined with the real possibility of literally forming one's personal identity in the process makes literary ecology especially relevant given the ongoing threats to sustainable human life.

Glotfelty argues that "literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact" (xix). Rowland further contends that

> ecocriticism challenges the assumption that literature is a self-sufficient entity . . . literature, like all cultural modes, cannot be wholly separated from the non-human world. Moreover, in that literature is currently part of a culture that is destroying itself by eroding non-human essential sources of sustenance, studying literature might help us to understand, and even reverse, exploitation of the environment. (4)

Views such as these govern my thinking in this paper. Re-reading "The Bear" or the entire context of *Go Down, Moses* has social implications for contemporary readers. The story offers more than nostalgia, or the reflected diminishment of Ike McCaslin, or even of the unraveling of a southern caste system. Apparently Faulkner posits his moody protagonist as the symbol of a passing, archaic, and unjust vision of a particular, unique context—from antebellum to the rise of Jim Crow in the American South. Beyond this, Faulkner's embellished reflection

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embodied within the character of Ike McCaslin forms a moving tribute to irreplaceable wilderness. The story serves ironic summons to anyone who would recognize the interdependence of reading literature and living in real, organic space and time.

Within its genealogical context of *Go Down, Moses*, "The Bear" offers literary ecologists first an instance of a positive approximation of human intercourse with nature. Ike, his male relatives, and a few others annually trek to the wilderness to hunt deer. In these annual excursions significant sociological events occur (bonding, storytelling, diverse interaction, and so forth),[14] but certainly a serious, even reverent connection to landscape and wildlife is foundational to these trips. To what extent an ecological awareness is realized by all the members of the party is not clear, but Ike's boyhood is obviously defined by his close association with the wilderness. His Chickasaw father figure had "marked him forever one with the wilderness" (178). Sam Fathers "taught the boy the woods . . . the two of them sitting beneath the close fierce stars on a summer hilltop while they waited for the hounds to bring the fox back within hearing, or beside a fire in the November or December woods while the dogs worked out a coon's trail along the creek, or fireless in the pitch dark and heavy dew of April mornings while they squatted beneath a turkey-roost" (170-71). Ike's sense of self is indistinguishable from his participation in the woods. This identity is in harmony with a wilderness ethic explained to him early in his life: "The earth dont [sic] want to just keep things, hoard them; it wants to use them again. Look at the seed, the acorns, at what happens even to carrion when you try to bury it: it refuses . . . , seethes and struggles . . . until it reaches light and air again, hunting the sun" (186).

Though Ike's identity is shaped in these experiences, the annual pilgrimages to deer camp are limited to a particular place and to a select few who temporarily enjoy the woods. It is important to recognize that a private relationship with the wilderness (whether idealistic or even responsible) is insufficient from an ecological standpoint. Despite the close relationship

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to wilderness celebrated in "The Bear," the presentation of Ike and his forefathers' connection to the land undergoes a dramatic shift reflected in the reduction of an old growth forest teeming with wildlife to a crudely harvested timber plot with an isolated tree here and there. In the extended saga, the woods are depleted and men must travel farther each time they venture into the remaining wilderness (335). Indeed, Faulkner forecasts a gloomy future for this wild place: "It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was a wilderness" (193).[15] Later, he "saw plain [the land's] ultimate doom, watching it retreat year by year before the onslaught of axe and saw and log-lines and then dynamite and tractor plows" (354). We see the dreary protagonist "look[ing] about in shocked and grieved amazement" at the implementation of the intruding railroad and the deforestation in high gear (318). Thus an *apophatic* use of Faulkner's story becomes apparent in the narration: what the land is not is what it becomes; what Isaac McCaslin is not is what he becomes. The reflection of Ike, especially as articulated in chapter 4 of "The Bear," is significant since its portrayal of personal and societal decline ironically emphasizes *via negativa* the importance of creating and maintaining an ecological self. The interrupted association of Ike and his forefathers' relationship to the land is ultimately that of deterioration and loss. Absent an activist reading, the story fades into history, then into myth.[16] Though heartfelt, and though they may effectively employ close reading and cultural *epistemes* that should be considered, such renderings are not helpful in any sustainable sense. Modernist ironies aside, we are left with an ominous snake in the garden (329-30), a symbol that only reinforces the notions of a cursed land and a cursed people whose tenuous relationship with it eventually dissolves to a divided self, marked by a conquering mentality. This collection of stories ends with the aged Ike McCaslin's detached disposition demonstrated by his dying in bed confronted by a young

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mother—perhaps a symbol of recurring life, certainly an ironic signifier concerning the curious display of masculinity, a deflated patriarchy (363-65).

Myth readings dominate interpretations of Faulkner's work. For example, Wendy Faris argues that "even though the self may not be able to center itself completely in the wilderness, individual identity is tied to the land" (253). Following her reading of Fernando Ainsa's concept of the "centripetal hero," Faris understands Ike McCaslin to be a character whose "nascent identity" is developed in "the temple of the forest" (253). Beyond this romantic sentiment, a significant part of her discussion recognizes the "paradox" or "dilemma" associated with identity and place, namely, that it offers "at once an image of desire and an image for the release of desire, an image for the realization and fulfillment of self and an image for the surrender of self" (253). Especially in Faulkner's principal character: "Ike's initial experience with this dilemma is implicit and fleeting: the conflict between his desire to kill the bear to affirm himself and the feeling of close kinship with the animal." She suggests the dilemma that Ike embodies "can reveal elements of self-deception" (253). What Ike feels on an individual level may be projected onto a more general, societal level regarding conflicting impulses of Americans and land: on the one hand we seem to be "linked closely to the land . . . in our search for uninhabited paradise" while simultaneously pulled to the "impulse to colonize the wilderness" (255). Use of the paradise myth allows us to see clearly that Ike's primary sense of self, his skill, knowledge, and values are gained by close association with the woods under the guidance of Sam Fathers. She concludes, "the naïve and sentimental view of the Edenic wilderness and its value as a model for living is simultaneously upheld and denied. Though subverted, it nevertheless remains, an ever-present ideal to civilization and its discontents" (254). I contend, however, that a development of self within a wilderness context need not be sentimental, nor naïve. Moreover, despite Faulkner's reliance upon the paradise myth, his complex novel does not end simply with affirmation of

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that view, as some would imply, or even in paradox or dilemma, as Faris claims. I agree that Faulkner's writing expresses the conflicting American compulsion to both love and destroy the woods. The dilemma makes for captivating writing, if not a modernist comment on the future of humankind that seems maniacally fated for a planet without virgin forests. Ike denounces his association with the wilderness of his youth, and in doing so it must be that his own once-flourishing sense of self will also be erased.

In her analysis of Faulkner and the paradise myth, Faris claims that Faulkner's novel "ends with a symbolic preservation of the wilderness—the land asserting its power over the invaders and would-be possessors of it" (257). Such a conclusion may be desirable, but it hardly seems to be the case in actuality. For one thing, on his death bed, Isaac refers to the "deswamped and denuded" land, and the woods are said to be "ruined" and "destroyed" (364). Moreover, the conclusion that Faris draws illustrates the limitations of a myth reading as it seems to exclude any historical facts associated with Faulkner's Mississippi, or any actual frustration the author may have had with the destruction of his wilderness. Finally, it offers no hope for succeeding generations to implement relevant and corrective understandings about human interaction with the wilderness. Though I agree with Faris (as well as Howe, Lydenberg, and many others) that the land is essential in Faulkner's work, rather than a preservation of land, in *Go Down*, *Moses*, just the opposite is the case—a helpless surrendering to the destruction of land hovers above the actors and their acts. In the process, we see a descent into lethargy and madness, evidence of confused and conflicting identity, frozen, erased, fundamentally changed, lacking any vital fire that once warmed the vibrant hearts of the men in the story. And, not to miss the point of the final scene under the solitary gum tree, there are very few trees left, certainly not enough to support forty squirrels. By the end of the novel, the balance of nature has been grossly interrupted. Deforestation has begun to take its ugly toll.

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Like Faris, Irving Howe recognizes the power of place in Faulkner's writing pointing out that "one of Faulkner's great subjects, human rootlessness in the modern world, is a subject made possible by the rootedness of his own life. . . . Even when [he] twists his language into knots or drives his action into a violent confusion, the sense of place remains true" (Howe 6). Like other interpreters who take myth into account, Howe notices a "radical disjunction between social man and the natural world . . . the wilderness is primal, source and scene of mobility, freedom, innocence; society, soon after it appears, begins to hollow out these virtues" (138).

Within this context of venerable wilderness and human development, Howe refers to Ike as Faulkner's "moral hero" (5). "The whole development of Isaac McCaslin consists in his effort to reconcile wilderness and society, or failing that, to decide which will allow and which frustrate the growth of moral responsibility" (92). Clearly, a sense of self is closely associated with wilderness. Myth critics (and critics from other reading strategies) agree with literary ecologists on this point. At issue, however, is not only the formative development of young Ike, but also the fuller discussion of his denial of his refusing to keep that very identity. In denying himself, doesn't he fail to see his tacit approval of the destruction of a place he once worshipped? In relinquishing the land, he prevents Boon (and others) from enjoying what he has been privileged to enjoy. His act interrupts the annual rituals and ostensibly limits the possibility of others developing those noble values acquired by close association with a pronounced sense of place. Lyall Powers explains that

> [r]eaders have praised Isaac for repudiating that seriously tainted inheritance. How good of him, they say, to wash his hands of evil, to have nothing to do with it. But those readers overlook that the cursed heritage nevertheless remains for someone to accept, and that the evil he turns away from still remains evil. Furthermore, they have

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> missed the fact that Isaac has repudiated only the responsibilities of that inheritance, retaining at least some of the benefits. (174)

From the perspective of the land itself, Ike leaves it vulnerable, to be scraped and scarred, unnecessarily and unjustly relegated to a cheap commodity. Mathews, Roszak, and other critics emphasize the point of view of the land itself, rather than merely reporting the human activity upon the land. Roszak argues:

> The sanity that binds us to one another in society is not necessarily the sanity that bonds us companionably to the creatures with whom we share the Earth. If we could assume the viewpoint of nonhuman nature, what passes for sane behavior in our social affairs might seem madness. But as the prevailing reality principle would have it, nothing could be greater madness than to believe that beast and planet, mountain and river have a "point of view". (13)[17]

Howe, perhaps more than some, is willing to consider the possibility of moral failure implied in Isaac's decision to relinquish the land, despite the "moral hero" label. Ike's relinquishment, according to Howe, affirms his eternal, familial allegiance to Sam Fathers, rather than to the racist family and their acts of which he has recently become acutely aware. Howe reminds us that Faulkner "relates the exploitation of the land to the exploitation of man" (91), and in this sense we understand the repulsion Ike feels regarding his family and their place. He wants nothing to do with it. He does not want to own it or in any way identify with a tainted inheritance. For him the decision to identify with Sam Fathers is "the moment of truth" and he "makes his judgment upon the world of history: a judgment of withdrawal and what may be called heroic passivity" (95). Yet what is passive heroism but finally, a retreat, acquiescence,

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fatalism that unnecessarily, one might even say cowardly, invites death only after a disheartening process of destruction. Howe recognizes that to some critics "Isaac's withdrawal, for all its saintly humaneness, does not bear sufficiently upon the condition that has caused it: he leaves the world intact, still caught up in its accumulated evil, and . . . fail[ing to] actively engage himself—he cannot be considered an heroic figure" (96). Faulkner

> seems to believe very deeply in the intrinsic value and ultimate efficacy of passive suffering. . . . He seems . . . to be persuaded of the moral rightness, perhaps the invincibility, of waiting and powerlessness. . . . He supposes not that the meek will inherit the earth, but that if they persist in their meekness, they may not need to inherit the earth. Modern readers, whether religious or not, must find this a difficult view to grasp; Faulkner himself finds it difficult. We are obliged not to accept it, only to take it seriously. (Howe 96-97)

Literary ecologists would take these comments seriously, but active stewardship need not be at odds with a gentle personality. Ike's failure to act positively is the problem. The facts about the environment of our beleaguered earth and the impractical, to say nothing of the unjust, ways we refuse to respond to it clearly remind us that we no longer can afford the luxury of a casual, incomplete, or even honest misreading of any text. This is especially the case when considering texts and biographies of writers such as Faulkner who have so forcefully helped to shape a nation's ontology. If young McCaslin may be celebrated as symbolic of a burgeoning society free to indulge in primal fantasies in a pristine wilderness, then does the timorous, withdrawn old man evident at the end of the novel represent a nation of depressed and dismembered individuals who would rather not face the ongoing challenge of stewardship?

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Faulkner himself is not “merely the melancholy singer of the fall of the South, or the pessimistic recorder of the modern wasteland world that ensued . . . [. Rather] the main thrust of his major fiction has, in truth, always been optimistic, hopeful, encouraging” (Powers 1).[18] His Nobel Prize acceptance speech positively affirmed humanity: “man will not merely endure [but] prevail . . . [and the] poet’s voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail” (qtd. in Meriwether 120). Merely recording human activity lends itself to myth and nostalgia, a lost world only to be talked about, whereas prevailing (with the aid of the poet’s voice) suggests a vital, sustainable existence.

Any literary criticism involves both an assertion of the theory involved and, to some extent at least, a negative critique of competing views. Literary ecology is no different in this regard, but the goal is to achieve a sustainable and just planet rather than simply, academically advocating for one theoretical impulse against another. Literary ecology, then, may be considered in the broader school of ethical criticism marshaled by Martha Nussbaum, Wayne Booth, and David Novitz.[19] For example, Nussbaum argues that the significant question in literary studies is the ethical question: “How should one live?” (168, 173). She “imagines . . . a future in which our talk about literature will return, increasingly, to a concern with the practical—to the ethical and social questions that give literature its high importance in our lives . . . in which literary theory (while not forgetting its many other pursuits) will also join with ethical theory in pursuit of the question, ‘How should one live?’” (168). This concern addresses the reader in a direct manner, presupposing an actual, active, ethical response. Given this, readers of “The Bear” should allow the story to stir them beyond abstract literary pursuits. They may also be piqued concerning what actions should be taken, what values should be embraced, which should be discarded, and similar kinds of real, meaningful issues that the text points to. Reading Faulkner, professional scholars as well as amateur readers

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have noticed the implicit (though powerful) understanding of the necessary decline of racism. These considerations are ethical in nature and implicitly connect the reader to a sense of right action, how one ought to behave in regard to fellow humans. But what of the place where this racism occurred? Ethical criticism, and in particular the emphases of ecocriticsm, are equally concerned with the environment of the human drama, not merely the esoteric conflicts of imagined characters. Any reading that ignores this setting implies that fiction is not grounded in landscape and does not remind us of ourselves and our social groupings. Clearly, one cannot make sense of *Go Down, Moses* (especially the disjunctive chapter 4 of "The Bear") if the sense of place with its shaping influences is disconnected from the human societies associated with the context.

Buell claims that ignoring the reality of landscape reinforces the wrongheaded notion that "environmental detail is of minor importance even in writing where the environment figures importantly as an issue" (*Environmental Imagination* 85). He notes that professional literary study too often fails to consider "literary naturescape . . . as a place of literal reference or as an object of retrieval or contemplation for its own sake," and so professors become "antienvironmentalists in their professional practice" (85). Sanders echoes this notion, declaring that much of contemporary fiction is "barren," a sense of place is missing. It lacks a vital connection to landscape ("Speaking a Word for Nature" 182-83). If the stories we tell ourselves are devoid of the organic, as if the characters, as well as the readers of those characters, were automatons alien to anything natural, then we are in the process of perpetrating a false sense of reality that violates the very essence of human survivability. Sanders claims: "landscape is the energizing medium from which human lives emerge and by which those lives are bonded and measured" (183). In this regard, "The Bear" offers a rare vibrancy. Its characterization of place is profound. Indeed, the identity of place is so tightly interwoven with the human motivation and action, timber, and animal life that one cannot

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satisfactorily understand "The Bear" without admitting this ecology of fiction and landscape. Sanders recognizes such integration, especially in the formation of young Ike, which illustrates a significant sense of place. But the conclusion Sanders draws also connects readers to the uncomfortable truth of deteriorating wilderness. We are not allowed to merely enjoy a fantastic fable of youthful innocence in a magical, once-upon-a-time Arcadia. Faulkner's text also reminds us of the ugly connection to the loss of wilderness:

> In order to see . . . the fabled bear, Faulkner's young hero must leave behind his gun, his compass, his watch, every mechanical contrivance, and yield himself to the woods. . . . In the course of the novel . . . the stand of virgin timber is sold to lumber companies and invaded by railroads and whittled away by the surrounding farms. Faulkner was concerned . . . not so much with the conflict between reason and imagination in our ways of seeing nature, as with reason's wholesale assault upon nature itself. His fable reminds us that, in a little over a century, our wilderness continent was transformed into one of the most highly industrialized landscapes in the world. (190)

It is staggering to contemplate the wholesale changes that have rapidly occurred in North America, most of it as a result of a greedy, impatient notion of progress. Roszak claims "less than ten percent of the virgin forest that spanned the continent when the first White settlers arrived still remains standing" (30). One study claims that in the 1930s the state of Mississippi "ranked first among southern states in lumber production and last in reforestation: 50 percent more wood was cut than replaced," and in subsequent decades Mississippi Delta forests continued to decline (Hickman qtd. in Buell, "Faulkner and the Claims of the Natural World" 11).

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Deforestation is not a simple matter to overcome. Hickman details a process with which Faulkner would have been familiar:

> Logging with skidders brought complete destruction of young timber of unmarketable size. . . . No trees or vegetation of any kind except coarse wire grass remained on the skidder-logged hill and ridges. For miles and miles the landscape presented a picture of bare open land that graphically illustrated the work of destruction wrought by the economic activities of man. (*Mississippi Harvest* 165 qtd. in Buell)

The story of "The Bear" is also the story of timber, a story that implores us to recognize the true value of wild, virgin, old-growth forests. We cannot have the bear without the forest, and allowing both to pass into extinction—or even in the meantime watch them disappear in an alarming, albeit perfunctory, manner—takes a toll on the soul of a nation. How disconcerting it is to read that the Nature Conservancy and other bear restoration groups estimate that only 50 to 100 bears live in the state of Mississippi today (most in the Delta area so familiar to Faulkner).[20]

Even from an elementary, or practical, standpoint such diminishment lessens the opportunities for recreation, belittles and cheapens the value of human experience, robs it of beauty. Beyond these concerns, the noble values that Faulkner attributes to a close association with nature are lost, to say nothing of the spiritual qualities that Sanders, Roszak, and Mathews emphasize. In 1831 the reflective Tocqueville wrote:

> Man gets accustomed to everything. He gets used to every sight. . . . [He] fells the forests and drains the marshes. . . . The wilds become villages, and villages towns. The American, the daily witness of such wonders, does not see anything astonishing in all

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> this. This incredible destruction . . . seems to him the usual progress of things in this world. He gets accustomed to it as to the unalterable order of nature. (qtd. in Adelson 178)

This observation made 180 short years ago bears witness to a mindset that misunderstood the relationship between humans and their environment. Specifically, it illustrates the highly problematic phenomena of measuring progress in terms of destruction and perpetuates the misconception that a wrongheaded sense of progress should be considered normal. Literary ecology joins other disciplines to declare that such a destructive mentality is not at all normal and that one cannot fully know a true sense of self if one's notion of the self is predicated upon incomplete ways of knowing and insufficient ways of being while dwelling on earth.

The joining of humans to wildlife (most notably, bear, deer and squirrels) to timber in Faulkner's fictive context requires a holistic reading. Such a reading naturally fits the text, noting the layers that its author embedded into the fabric of the story. Faulkner's story suggests an interconnected, organic reality rather than an imposed relationship between animal and plant and human life (including the deconstruction of racially segregated society). Rather, it is the fragmentary, dualistic imposition that skews the natural order. The view of reality that separates self from nature has significantly contributed to our staggering abuse of nature because it substitutes a human neurosis that tries to justify the rapid destruction of our planet under the false guise of progress. Within the broad parameters of this duality, we have contorted a utilitarian (rather than ethical, material rather than spiritual) view of nature as mere material resources. In doing so we have relegated nature to the status of something alien, something other, and therefore we fail to respect its living, self-realizing personality.[21]

Any reading of "The Bear" must consider that old Isaac McCaslin is significantly changed by the last of the story. When that conclusion is joined with his deathbed scene in

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"Delta Autumn" (365), it becomes obvious that the reduction of Ike is a major theme for Faulkner. The question is not so much why Ike changes, withdraws into a weakened caricature of patriarchy, but rather what readers are to do with this presentation. Powers places McCaslin in a group of Faulkner characters who "passively serve evil ends by failing to do what they know is good. [They] are often the intelligent and perhaps even well-intentioned characters . . . [,] men whose failure of courage and, hence, of love prevents them from acting on their good ideals. They are Faulkner's quasi-tragic heroes; they are tragically self-destructive" (253). Of various possible conclusions one might consider about the depiction of the withdrawn, isolated old man Ike, clearly he represents the impotent and meaningless, pathetic existence that results from a fragmented view of the world. Ike mistakenly has believed he could detach himself from his former self. Regardless of his motive, he feels that by a simple act of refusal, his past, his place will be erased and his identity will somehow be subtly redeemed. His character represents those who would divide culture and nature. Such a dichotomy fails to understand that the intimacy of wilderness is viscerally connected to the identity of self.

The connection of forest and the biosphere is undeniable, and the easy dismissal of this link in Faulkner's story is maddening, depressing. Maybe the connection was not as clear (or pressing) to Faulkner (as later environmental discussions would cause forest issues to be clarified). Or, perhaps, his awareness produces a story with a pathetic ending. A madman frantically working a broken gun under a solitary gum tree may be his artistic way of demonstrating the negative effect on humanity when the forest is depleted. An activist reading would consider all this, even as it recognizes a call to respond. Buell, for example, argues that Faulkner's forest is "blurry" and "symbolic" and his "generalized" depiction where "treeness matters but the identities and the material properties of the trees are inconsequential. Faulkner's text encourages us [as does his occasional public commentary] to admire young

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Ike McCaslin's growing prowess as a woodsman but to feel no obligation to emulate it" (*Environmental Imagination* 10). Given Faulkner's language of the text quoted earlier (and his occasional comments about his story), he seems sadly aware of the demise of the Delta forest. (Buell says as much elsewhere when he suggests that Faulkner ultimately succumbed to narrative impulse and even practical, economic matters as a writer, despite his concern for the environment ("Faulkner and the Claims of the Natural World" 6).

Clearly Faulkner recognizes the destruction of natural landscapes, and one of his responses is his creation of a conflicted patriarch who ultimately relinquishes his claim to the land in question. Ike repudiates all this apparently because of his newfound and troubling understanding of racism within his familial society. But his failure to inherit the land and his abdication of stewardship of a wonderful wilderness has consequences that reach farther than he imagined. His repudiation is not simply a private matter for the sake of individual conscience. A more effective repudiation of his ancestors' vile acts would have been for Ike to possess the land and protect its trees from clear-cutting timber companies. But to simply relinquish his claim, and by implication his responsibility of stewardship, is to passively watch the destructive march of short-sighted capitalism. Ike's relinquishment is really a retreat into victimization. Passive virtue erodes to nothing but dull memory, as the original richness of the land is forever squandered. Destruction of natural habitat at the hands of humanity is abnormal. Moreover, that very humanity, the ecocosm itself, suffers through the destruction of wilderness. No lasting good comes from a divided self. Roszak argues: "We discover a repression that weighs upon our inherited sense of loyalty to the planet that mothered the human mind into existence. If psychosis is the attempt to live a lie, the epidemic psychosis of our time is the lie of believing we have no ethical obligation to our planetary home" (13, 14). Ike McCaslin is referred to as "apostate" (39) by the narrator of the novel, speaking presumably on behalf of a community of hunters and fellow wilderness campers, but

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this apostasy seems more about heritage and the honor of a family than a consistent obligation to a wilderness. Roszak puts the issue squarely in terms of ethics and responsibility to a planet. Repression tragically inspires the phenomena of passive indifference while the planet suffers to the point of extinction. The sign of a healthy human population is a population of ecologically Self-realizing people, to use Mathews' terms. Roszak hopes that societies of Earth will find the courage to practice "creative redirection" of Earth's resources (253).

Ike McCaslin's early sense of self is developed by two positive forces: the enchanted place and Sam Fathers. To be clear, I am not advocating a simple stereotype that Native Americans are creatures of an uncivilized wilderness, but it seems obvious that the one character in *Go Down, Moses* who displays the most authenticity, the one who is respected by all members from various social classes and the one who most realistically has attained the status of an ecological self, is Sam Fathers.[22] His personality, his identity, is inseparable from the wilderness. Even his grave (on a plot of ground "which Major de Spain had reserved out of the sale" thus keeping it from the timber company) is obscured in the little plot of remaining wilderness. As Ike takes his last stroll, however, he seems remarkably unmoved: "*He* [Sam Fathers] *probably knew I was in the woods this morning long before I got here*, he thought" (328). The narration then takes on a long, mystical, pantheistic tone. Part of it reads:

> [Sam] had turned his back, not vanished but merely translated into the myriad life which printed the dark mold of these secret and sunless places with delicate fairy tracks, which, breathing and biding and immobile, watched him from beyond every twig and leaf until he moved, moving again, walking on; he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and

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> sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad, one. (328-29)

Evidently Faulkner's understanding of the loss of Mississippi wilderness (and the societies that inhabited and used it) is consoled by mystical reflection, such as previously quoted. In this way readers gain a measure of sympathy for Ike, who has relinquished a place that is obviously precious to him. Nonetheless, from a literary ecologist's point of view, though the narration is elegiac and beautiful, it should be noted that the timber company's aggression against the land is the result of choice. It is not inevitable. The wilderness could have been saved. Obviously Ike had discovered conflicting emotions concerning his heritage, but his disowning of the land does little to assuage that past, despite his intentions.[23] I think it is simply wrong to read *Go Down, Moses* as an inevitable result of the passing of time. The sacred places of wilderness (from the great parks which we have decided as a nation to protect with government management, to the little pieces of family land that Sanders remembers,[24] the places you and I know and remember) must be allowed to continue in their eternal cycle of natural rhythms. Ecology is first and foremost a matter of individual conscience, and though large-scale issues such as the Amazon Rain Forest or California Redwoods require mass political action, such action only arises when sufficient numbers of individuals develop an awareness that mirrors Sam Fathers. We may not live and die in the woods as he did, but we must live and die as though we do!

Old Isaac McCaslin is meaningful for readers because his inaction, and the consequences of that noncommittal, embody the potential to move us beyond the status quo regarding American encounters with landscape and the natural order around and within us. It will take more than the humanist tradition in art and literature, however, to sustain our future.

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At the very least the humanist tradition needs to take into account interdisciplinary processes and the pursuit of socially responsible reading embedded in all texts. Though few of us had the idyllic landscape ripe with the adventures of young Ike McCaslin, many of us had a special place in nature that has now been vanquished or tarnished forever. Like Isaac McCaslin, we too will die in accord with two choices presented us regarding how we will have constructed our sense of self and how we will have lived as a result of our constructed identity. We may choose to ignore the pressing realities of environmental concerns, living with little regard for our sense of interrelatedness, and so come to the end of our lives with a sense of regret, a sense of lukewarm, non-involvement that sours even as it struggles to conjure pleasant memories of bygone days. Or, we can come to the end of our lives knowing we have lived with a sense of ecological awareness that redefines existence. We may positively answer a certain call of responsibility to wilderness (that may indeed connect us to a mythical past), but one that guarantees the satisfaction that we cared for that which ultimately surpasses individuality. Within the ethical tension involved in the process of becoming an ecological self, we gain the rewards of creating for ourselves and our children's children a sustainable heritage. Perhaps the mocking tone of one of Faulkner's public letters (posted August 24, 1960) illustrates his evolving disapproval for wanton destruction:

> The posted woods on my property inside the city limits of Oxford contain several tame squirrels. Any hunter who feels himself too lacking in woodcraft and marksmanship to approach a dangerous wild squirrel, might feel safe with these. These woods are a part of the pasture used by my horses and milk cow; also, the late arrival will find them already full of other hunters. He is kindly requested not to shoot either of these. (qtd. in Meriwether 232)

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Apparently a number of squirrels survived Boon's fictional assault, enjoying their newfound privileged status as survivors in the grumpy, eventual stewardship of one Mississippi author.

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Notes

[1] I am practically using the terms *literary ecology* and *ecocriticism* synonymously though I prefer the term *literary ecologist*. Literary ecologists do the work of ecocriticism, which, technically, encompasses more than just analysis of fiction. These terms are not in conflict with the claims of ecopsychology and various branches of environmental philosophy and ecology. Though the various sources I use have specializations (Gestalt or Jungian psychology, for example), I am concerned with the premise they all have in common, namely, that the human self is formed by close awareness of and sustained submission to the natural world.

[2] In addition to foundational thinkers such as Hume, Sartre, and Mead, see Mitchell Aboulafia's *The Mediating Self: Meade, Sartre and Self-Determination*. Similar to Roszak and Mathews, a connection of "ecological self" with a constructionist understanding of human development may be found in Bragg and Clayton.

[3] Dodds explains how psychoanalysis is relevant (along with geology, ecology, biology, and climatology), precisely because psychoanalysis addresses human motivation. He also queries: "We need to ask why this issue, despite its current prominence, fails to ignite people's motivation for the major changes science tells us is necessary" (27). Dodds claims the lack of motivation "concerns not only the 'public' but the academy and the psychoanalytic community" (27).

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Clearly the association of motivation and emotion is critical to developing and sustaining an "ecological self." Much thinking about ecological concerns distinguishes between what Timothy Morton understands as the "ethic of *responsibility*" as opposed to the "psychoanalytic question of *enjoyment*" (76). Following Derrida, Morton moves us beyond oppositional categories that constitute "ecologocentrism [that] underpins most environmentalist philosophy, preventing access to the full scope of interconnectedness. Thinking, even environmentalist thinking, sets up "Nature" as a reified thing in the distance" (75). Therefore, this "distance" between us and "Nature" may leave us "aesthetically captivated" much as we would be captivated by an "auratic work of art." Society, therefore, "can no longer be defined as purely human. Thinking interdependence involves thinking *différance*: the fact that all beings, not just symbolic ones, are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge" (75).

[4] Joseph Gold refers to "The Bear" as the turning point in Faulkner's work indicating his change from "the creation of myth to the construction of discourse." He points out that Faulkner originally published this story with the title "Lion" (the dog who hunts bear), and it was "simply a very good hunting story about Boon Hogganbeck and Lion, told by a boy whose role in the drama was minimal" (49-50). Irving Howe explains that Faulkner "presents the consequence of an action before allowing us to apprehend its full cause," so section V of "The Bear" occurs "three years earlier than section IV" (256). Howe says this arrangement makes the story a "dialectically richer, more troubling work that demands greater energy and attention from its readers than did the earlier version—perhaps a less perfect work but also a more interesting one" (257-58).

[5] Irving Howe notes: "The voice in 'The Bear' is that of an observer who knows all the actors, Isaac McCaslin and Sam Fathers and Major DeSpain; more important it is the voice not so much of an individual as of the community itself, the collective conscience of

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Yoknapatawpha . . . its very pitch and inflection conveying moral judgment" (258). The concept of a collective voice is common in Native American literature. Compare Howe's thoughts with contemporary Choctaw writer LeAnne Howe's concept of "tribalography": "Native stories, no matter what form they take (novel, poem, drama, memoir, film, history) seem to pull all the elements together of the storyteller's tribe, meaning the people, the land, multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieu. Present, and future milieu means a world that includes non-Indians" (31).

[6] David H. Evans notes the irony that the hunters go to the woods to "escape civilization and convention" only to enter into even more conventionalized activity. . . the hunt is really a game" governed by "an elaborate and rigid set of codes and rules" (187).

[7] Understandably, this adventurous saga has been the focus of popular reading as well as critical attention. Much of it associated with masculinity and/or mythical responses to an engaging tale (Donaldson).

[8] Faulkner prepares readers by making several references to mechanization intruding into the wilderness (318, 320-21). These references echo Thoreau's experience of hearing for the first time a train in the wilderness. Based on Thoreau's experience (and other machines "in the garden" on display in American literature) Leo Marx distinguishes the "pastoral and primitive ideals. . . Both seem to originate in a recoil from the pain and responsibility of life in a complex civilization—the familiar impulse to withdraw from the city, locus of power and politics, into nature. The difference is that the primitivist hero keeps going . . . he locates value as far as possible, in space or time or both, from organized society; the shepherd, on the other hand, seeks a resolution of the conflict between the opposed worlds of nature and art" (22). In contrast to both heroic types that Marx identifies, Faulkner's protagonist falls into despair withdrawing from the painful intrusion he witnesses, ironically and passively

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redefining himself. Buell notes that "Faulkner was no mere literary pastoralist or primitivist in his reflections on Southern environmental history, but ventured them against the background of considerable knowledge of its economic, social, and racial ramifications—even if these get sometimes bent or eclipsed somewhat for the sake of his narrative" ("Faulkner and the Claims of the Natural World" 14).

[9] The term *Solastalgia* coined by the Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht becomes relevant in this context: "*solastalgia* refers to "missing a loved place that still exists but to which the old birds and plants and animals no longer come. . . . *Solastaglia* combines the Latin word for comfort (*solacium*) and the Greek root meaning pain *(algia*) and differs from nostalgia in that it's a yearning for a place you still inhabit rather than one you've left behind" (Bogard 179, 304).

[10] Contemporary Chickasaw historian Phillip Carroll Morgan, assessing the interaction between Faulkner and Chickasaw culture, presents a "reasonable assertion that the Faulkner family for generations had been acquainted with the Harrises and other prominent Chickasaw personalities, their stories and histories, and that William Faulkner drew directly on this knowledge in order to produce his luminary work" (111). Morgan convincingly demonstrates that Faulkner's famous, fictitious Yoknapatawpha County is derived from his immediate familial knowledge of Yakni Patafa, the family estate of Cyrus Harris, the first Governor of the Chickasaw Nation (67-112).

[11] In addition to the many mythic readings, Evans notes that Faulkner himself encouraged such reading (182). For example, see Gwynn and Blotner (2, 10, 47).

[12] See David Evans as well as Charles Aiken's "A Geographical Approach" and Backman's "The Wilderness and the Negro in . . . 'The Bear.'" Historical analyses include: Altenband's "A Suspended Moment: The Irony of History" as well as "Reading the Forms of History: Plantation Ledgers and Modernist Experimentation . . ." by Horn, et al. LeAnne

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Howe and Phillip Carroll Morgan offer insight concerning the Chickasaw and Native American presence in Faulkner and Mississippi. Also, in their respective works, Howe, Gold, and Powers refer to various cultural and historical views.

[13] The work of literary ecology is not only to enlighten readers of the ecological concerns embedded within important texts, but also to move readers to reconsider their own personal orientation to the natural environments so easily overlooked.

[14] Notice the ironic, diverse, multi-cultural society that emerges in the wilderness deer camps where men of various social status temporarily function in semblance of brotherhood. Though not enjoying equal status, the rigid caste system of everyday life seems temporarily lessened as the men function together in the primitive pursuit of game. Apparently the ability to perform in the woods draws the men together in a way that civilized society does not allow.

[15] Beyond his fictional representations, Faulkner's comments on the passing wilderness suggest nostalgia and finally acquiescence. For example, Gwynn and Blotner record him answering a question about the destruction of the wilderness saying: "man progresses mechanically and technically much faster than he does spiritually, that there may be something he could substitute for the ruined wilderness, but he hasn't found. . . . to me [the ruination] is a sad and tragic thing. . . . I don't want [the wilderness he grew up in] to change" (68). He also says that it is "foolish to be against progress because everyone is a part of progress and he'll have no other chance except this one so it's silly not to cope with it, to compromise with it, cope with it" In this passage, "progress" refers directly to "get[ting] rid" of the forest (98).

[16] Even now some readers and critics do not understand the event of deer camp, which still occurs annually (to some degree) with many in certain rural areas of our country. So a significant part of Faulkner's story is basically foreign, outdated history to many readers.

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[17] Compare Roszak's emphasis of "nonhuman nature" with that of Rowland, Morton, and Dodds.

[18] "Some of the most satisfactory expositions of individual works have failed to grasp Faulkner's optimistic sweep, neglecting the whole for the parts; and some of the best studies of the whole corpus have also failed of that perception" (Powers 1).

[19] Compare Morton's comments on ethical responsibility.

[20] See the websites "BEaR: Education & Restoration Group of Mississippi" and "Black Bears in the Mississippi Delta."

[21] This is apparent in Mathews's holistic model previously identified. See her fuller explanation of the "holistic nesting of a self in a wider self-system" (143-44). She concludes, "the individual is thus in a very real sense a microcosm of the wider self in which it occurs" (144). The "wider self" includes the esteem of non-human life and elements that constitute oneness.

[22] Compare Irving Howe's analysis of Faulkner's "Red Leaves": "The earth is no longer held in that communal anonymity to which Faulkner looks back; and Isaac McCaslin, examining the waste of the homeland, says of the American White man: 'The woods and the fields he ravages and the game he devastates will be the consequence and the signature of his crime and guilt, and his punishment'" (139). Though the elegy for nature is apparent, if not profound, Phillip Morgan is offended by Faulkner's representation especially in "Red Leaves" because "the people he's satirizing are my people." However, Morgan understands and seems to respect Faulkner's "eloquent and respectful constructions of his characters' Indian roots," especially his "stirring portrayal of Sam Fathers" whose "power seems ultimately to emanate for the land itself." Morgan contends that Faulkner's "racism" is in part to sell a White reading audience, but he notes that its "appeal originates from the land" (104). The power of land in Faulkner's writing "reflect[s] the power of the place in which his stories were

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conceived and written and that place is inseparable from its indigenous inhabitants and their traditions" (111). Finally Morgan recognizes the "progress" in Faulkner's "depth of understanding, in his consciousness of tribal culture from his first Indian story 'Red Leaves' to his last Indian story, 'The Bear.' . . . His characters gain depth and authenticity" (112). If Faulkner is to be congratulated for subverting the racist culture he inherited, this ironic championing of diversity within a White supremacist society, it should also be noted that the land that was secured (some purchased, some stolen, and most all appropriated) and transferred into the hands of White settlers, and which many Chickasaws exited for Oklahoma in the 1830s, endures despite the various cultures that have lived and used it. This sense of land, its mystic history seems profound in Faulkner by 1942, the year of publishing "The Bear."

[23] Powers points out that despite his noble refusal of his inheritance, we must recognize that the "cursed heritage nevertheless remains for someone to accept, and that the evil he [Ike] turns away from still remains evil" (174). Furthermore, failing to understand the full implications of his "heroic passivity," [we miss] "the fact that Isaac has repudiated only the responsibilities of that inheritance, retaining at least some of the benefits" (174). So the "good, weak hero" (183) that Faulkner creates remains instructive to twenty-first century readers. For too many, the remaining wilderness areas are merely set aside places for escape, and those using them merely for the purpose of escape lack the soul of the wilderness. They fail to carry on a living communion with nature. For these, nature is always something external, a commodity to be acted upon rather than submitted to. Nature is reduced to an act of appropriation rather than a living relationship with the one sojourning in the wilderness.

[24] See his "Buckeye" memoir.

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