Thisbe and all the other recordless Romeos and their Jul- 
iets, the world's oldest and most shining tale limning in 
his brief turn the warp-legged foul-mouthed English horse- 
groom as ever Paris or Lochinvar or any else of earth's 
splendid rapers: the doomed glorious frenzy of a love-
story, pursued not by an unclosed office file nor even the 
raging frustration of the millionaire owner, but by its 
own inherent doom, since, being immortal, the story, the 
legend, was not to be owned by any one of the pairs who 
added to its shining and tragic increment, but only to be 
used, passed through, by each in their doomed and homeless 
turn. (153-154)

In comparing this story with "The Bear," one can see that, although 
the type of man-beast relationship portrayed here is not of the same 
quality as those in the Old Ben story, the technique of depicting the 
relationship is the same. First of all, certain key words reappear 
in the Theft Section that were emphasized in "The Bear:" "apopthosis," 
"immortal," "pageant," "doomed." Secondly, the man-animal relation-
ship is raised to the level of a man to man, or man-woman relationship. 
And, thirdly, myth and romantic image are called upon to give the 
relationship an aura of transcendence, of an out-of-the-ordinary sig-
nificance and existence.

From a description of the type of relationship that existed be-
tween the beast and the man, Faulkner goes on to evolve the meaning, 
the symbolic significance, of this theft. The meaning comes slowly, 
indirectly, with hints and suggestions presented at first, and with 
a final summation coming later in the story.

The first fact introduced into the story that suggests this hidden 
meaning or significance, is that of the old Negro's involvement in and 
dedication to this theft, which is supported, perpetrated, by gambling: 
"a horseman, a groom, merely by accident, but by avocation and dedi-
cation a minister of God, sworn dedicated enemy of sin yet who appar-
ently without qualm or hesitation had long since drawn and then forgot
it the line of his rectitude to include the magnificent ruined horse
and all who were willing to serve it . . . " (156).

One must go back to the main story of the novel for a complete
picture of the old Negro, but this and other similar passages in the
Theft Section indicate that this man is no foolish and unethical elder;
rather, he is depicted as possessed of deep insight and as concerned
with his call to "bear witness" (180). His participation, then, in
the theft, demonstrates what Faulkner has said earlier: that the
"thieves" are no mere "gang of opportunists;" that some higher justice
or values are involved in the bizarre flight. The phrase "the magnifi-
cent ruined horse and all who were willing to serve it" suggests fur-
ther that, for the old Negro and the groom, the horse has some signi-
ficence, or calls forth some response, similar to that the corporal
in the main story attracts; some appeal to basic human qualities or
ideas.

There is the fact, too, that despite the advertised reward, the
federal agents are never able to find, when they arrive at a town
where the horse has been raced, "one human being who had ever heard
of the three-legged horse and the two men and the child, let alone
seen them" (158).

The devotion of the thieves to their act, in the face of tremendous
odds, and the knowledge that it cannot go on forever, plus the silent
protection they are given by those who have seen them, are what final-
ly persuade the deputy-poet that something special is represented in
the crazy theft. He found that "suddenly and with no warning, something
had happened to him . . . He realized what it was about the whole business that he had refused to accept ever since Weatherford, Texas, and then . . . dismissed it forever because what remained had not only to be the answer but the truth too; or not even the truth, but truth, because truth was truth . . . (158-159). Faulkner does not yet say what it is that these men see in the theft that draws this response. Instead, he turns again to describe the old Negro, comparing his instantaneous recognition of the horse and the groom, with the year it took the deputy-poet to achieve the same recognition, insight: "a minister, a man of God, sworn dedicated enemy of man's lusts and follies, yet who from that first moment had not only abetted theft and gambling, but had given to the same cause the tender virgin years of his own child as ever of old had Samuel's father or Abraham his Isaac . . ." (159).

The ex-deputy-poet joins the group fleeing with the horse, and, as the second year passes, he begins to realize that the end must soon come:

...the sum, the amount of the reward -- the black, succinct evocation of that golden dream, that shining and incredible heap of dollars to be had by any man for the simple turn of a tongue, always ahead of them . . . disseminating the poison faster . . . than the meteor-course of love and sacrifice, until already the whole Mississippi-Missouri-Ohio watershed must be corrupt and befouled and at last the deputy knew that the end was in sight: . . . seeing them -- the man and the horse and the two Negroes whom they had snatched as it were willy nilly into that fierce and radiant orbit -- doomed not at all because passion is ephemeral . . . nor even because the rape was: theft and theft is wrong and wrong shall not prevail, but simply because, due to the sheer repetition of zeros behind a dollar-mark on a printed placard, everyone within eyerange or tonguespread . . . would be almost frantically attuned to the merest whisper regarding the horse's whereabouts. (160-161)
The dollar sign, and man's desire for "that shining and incredible heap of gold" are the forces that oppose the "love and sacrifice" represented by the horse and its abductors. Because this force is so powerful, it has doomed the theft, the act of passion, from the outset; only time, the slow spread of the poison of greed, of materialism, stands between the pursued and the pursuers, and that separation is a slowly constricting one. That which is represented by the bizarre flight is an ephemeral passion, some act of the human heart which, Faulkner says (l61) manages to transcend time, to live after the destruction, the rubble, that man's materialism leaves as its monument. The idea that such a dedication to a passionate and doomed act of the heart is noble, is made by the better part of man, and that as man, and humanity itself, is somehow made better by experiencing such an act, is important to the understanding of the meaning of the Theft Section, both in itself, and in relation to the whole novel.

The ex-deputy-poet, drawn into the web of dedication and service which halos the theft, offers an explanation for the theft and Harry's shooting of the horse, when the pursuers finally catch up with them. As the groom obscenely curses him, in his curious manner of being forever foul-mouthed, the deputy says:

The reason was so that it could run, keep on running, keep on losing races at least, finish races at least even if it did have to run them on three legs, did run them on three legs because it was a giant and didn't need even three legs to run them on but only one with a hoof at the end to qualify as a horse. While they would have taken it back to the Kentucky farm and shut it up in a whorehouse where it wouldn't need any legs at all . . . . Fathering colts forever more; they would have used its ballocks to geld its heart with for the rest of its life, except that you saved it because any man can be a father, but only the best, the brave --. (163)
He is almost right, but he has yet to understand that there is more involved in the theft and the shooting of the horse than the horse itself, and the idea of a natural nobility and a fulfilling of a great potential. The idea of brotherhood, of a unity of man in idealism and materialism, which runs throughout the novel, is part of the meaning to be found in the events surrounding the horse. This is brought out by two significant initiations in the story. One is Harry's baptism into the community of religion, of faith and belief in the essential goodness of man, by the old Negro. The minister says that, in the beginning, the groom's plans about what he was going to do with the horse were different. "'But not long. It was during that time when we was walking to Texas. We was hiding in the woods one day by a creek and I talked to him and that evening I baptised him in the creek into my church. And after that he knowed too that betting was a sin. We had to do a little of it, win a little to live on, buy feed for it and grub for us. But that was all. God knowed that too. That was all right with Him!'" (198). His original plan had been to get rich off the fantastic speed of the horse by betting on it when no one in his right mind, unless he knew the horse, would have done so. But the Negro taught him about sin, about what it meant to use the special affinity and love that existed between him and the horse to satisfy his greed.

The second is the initiation of the groom into the society of Masons. Faulkner uses this society to represent a kind of brotherhood existing for the mutual benefit of its members. Harry reciprocates the gift of faith the Negro gave him by bringing the minister
into the Masonic society. Because they are Masons, and the Masonic brothers have a duty to one another, the Negro and the groom are freed from the small town jail the night after they are arrested, although the aura of romance, of fantastic dedication to an ideal in the face of overwhelming odds is also part of the reason they are freed. Their story appeals to that often slumbering element in men which brings a kind of protective and vicarious response to tales of wild adventure and romance enacted in their midst.

The idea of brotherhood, of a unity of purpose, thought and action among men, which makes them strong in the face of a world seemingly bent on forcing them into submission to an unknowable scheme of things, is two-fold. The dedication of the groom, the minister and his son to the horse is that of a dedication to an ideal. The ex-deputy is included in the pursuit of the ideal. And many of the people, the country folk they come in contact with on their tour, recognize the special relationship and the dedication. This is one side of the bond that grows between men through an appeal to basic values.

But the second kind of bond that unites the horse and his circle to the world, is the appeal to the materialistic side of man. The majority of those who have seen or heard about the horse seem to believe that the men are winning a fantastic amount of money with the horse. This interpretation appeals to that desire in men to win all he can by whatever means possible. Men seem to admire and esteem most of all those who can win the prize when the odds are greatest; when the winners, like their admirers, are also underdogs. This cause of unity, of identification, which exists in the story, is based on
an illusion, but one which the thieves support. The old Negro recognizes the vicarious satisfaction the people who know the horse receive from their knowledge of the theft, of the illicitness of the group. When the old Negro returns to the town where they were first arrested (and is again arrested and again set free), before the town's people let him go, they ask him about the money, about how much he and the groom had won, and he tells them: "'It was a heap'" (188). Their reaction to the answer is one of satisfaction, of expectations gratified, although, because the minister is a Negro, they have to make him leave town. "'We don't like rich niggers here,'" their spokesman says (189).

But the old Negro suggests to the runner that even these men know the truth of the matter. "'There wasn't no money . . . There never was none, except just what we needed, had to have. Never nobody but that New Orleans lawyer believed there was'" (198). The ex-deputy, trying to explain why the people supported the theft, even broke the law to set the groom and the two Negroes free, says: "'... justice certainly, might not have prevailed, but something more important had -- ... truth, love sacrifice, and something else even more important than they: some bond between or from man to his brother man stronger than even the golden shakles which doopered precariously his ramshackle A earth --" (198). Although the lust for gold had put an end to the act of passion and love, the act, and the unity, the brotherhood it had called forth, transcended the mere ending of the flight; and, strangely enough, the materialism, the greed, was part-cause of that unity.

The last part of the Theft Section concentrates on Harry, the groom, the Romeo of the romance:
... he moved, breathed, not merely in an aura of bastardy and Bachelordom but of homelessness too, like a half-wild pedigreeless pariah dog: fatherless, wifeless, sterile and perhaps impotent too, misshapen, savage and foul: the world's portionless and intractable and inconsolable orphan.

(189-190)

Ugly, misshapen, "pedigreeless," he is in direct contrast to the superb horse whom he loves. And one believes his wifelessness, sterility and perhaps impotence are part of what drove him to prevent the horse from being turned into a stud. Orphaned and unloveable, he turns to the horse for companionship, and lives, through it, the life of the brave and the beautiful.

After the horse's death, the groom returns to the Tennessee foothills, where he had been made a Mason, and begins to work for an old hill couple, helping them in their struggle to eke a living from "a sheer pitch of mountainside," farming their "straggling patch of corn standing in niggard monument to the incredible, the not just back- but heart-breaking meagre labor which each stalk represented" (196). He was in mourning, the old Negro says, although no one knew it "because they couldn't see his heart" (196):

... the man who ten months ago had walked in the company of giants and heroes and who even yesterday, even without the horse and solitary and alone, had still walked in its magnificent shadow, now ... always in that clean fresh rotation of faded blue which was not the regalia of his metamorphosis and the badge of all plodding enduring husbandry, but which hid and concealed even the horsewarped curvature of his legs, obliterating, effacing at last the last breath or recollection of the old swaggering aura bachelor, footfree and cavalier, so that ... there remained ... only the foul raked heavily-checked cap talking (not the heart talking of passion and bereavement) among the empty Tennessee hills ... . . . (196-197)

He then returns to England, joins the army and is sent to France, where
he eventually dies a martyr's death.

The story of the horse theft is, in part, an explanation for the later actions of its hero. At the beginning of the Theft Section Faulkner says that, in the twenty-four months the groom was in America, "three things happened to him which changed completely not only his life, but his character too, so that when late in 1914 he returned to England to enlist, it was as though somewhere behind the Mississippi Valley hinterland where within the first three months he had vanished, a new man had been born, without past, without griefs, without recollections" (151).

But besides offering an explanation of the sentry's character, the story also provides significant parallels to the themes and ideas of the whole novel. Just as in the Theft Section materialism and idealism are seen in conflict, so in the main story itself the two forces are opposed, although in the latter they have a broader scope. The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces, in the scene where he tries to pursue him, his son, to give up the ideals he follows, says:

'I am champion of this mundane earth which, whether I like it or not, is, and to which I did ask to come, yet since I am here, not only must stop but intend to stop during my allotted while; you champion of an esoteric realm of man's baseless hopes and his infinite capacity—no: passion—for unfact. No, they are not inimical really, there is no contest actually; they can exist side by side together in this one restricted arena, and could and would, had yours not interfered with mine." (348)

These two men (the main characters of the novel), are the champions representing the opposed and irreconcilable forces of both the inner and outer worlds of man; the social and the mental worlds where man's ideal and material, or mundane, natures stand forever separate. This
conflict is mirrored in the Theft Section, with a similar result evolving from the opposition: the destruction of that which represents the esoteric realm, the world of passion and ideals, by the forces of the "mundane earth."

However, though in both the main story and the Theft Section the forces of idealism and brother-love are defeated—in the sense that those who, in the novel, represent these aspects are destroyed—the final impression of both stories is a sense that the forces of the esoteric realm live beyond their attempted destruction. The groom, after the horses death, goes on to bring the death-haunted soldiers in the trenches a gift of hope. The runner remains after the death of the corporal (and Harry's death also). He has experienced all that the other two men represent, as well as having experienced the power of the supreme general, which had destroyed the sentry and the corporal. From his experiences he has learned the nature of man and of the world. As a sign that he is now the new champion in the battle of the esoteric with the mundane, he is given the medal which had once been the corporal's.

The relationship of the ex-deputy to the groom complements the relationship of the British runner to the corporal; the runner's relationship to the sentry is the same as the poet's relationship to the groom. Both at first are on the sides opposed to the two heroes; both, in the end, come to an understanding of what these men represent. Consequently, they acquire a better understanding of man, and of the dual forces that shape him and his world. Faulkner makes it clear that the runner and the deputy are parallel characters when, in describ-
ing the ex-deputy's reaction to the theft, he says: "... the Federal deputy, the titular-by-protocol leader of the pursuit, found that, suddenly and with no warning, something had happened to him which was to happen five years later in Paris to a British soldier even whose name he would never hear" (158).

That which happens to the deputy and the runner is described in the closing of the Theft Section when the runner says, after hearing the story: "'Maybe what I need is to have to meet somebody. To believe. Not in anything; just to believe. To enter that room down there, not to escape from anything but to escape into something... just to sit in the same room for a while with that affirmation, that promise, that hope. If I only could... Anybody only could. Do you know what the loneliest experience of all is?... It's breathing'" (203). He recognizes man's need for that hope, that belief, which the corporal and the sentry offer men—and he sees too that man will believe, despite everything, because without belief and hope, existence becomes unbearable. Two men in the novel, a priest and an American flyer, lose their belief, and consequently commit suicide.

Thus, the Theft Section, describing the relationship between the groom and the race horse, and the strange events that result from it, is a variation on the themes of the main story of *A Fable*. Faulkner portrays the ideals of love and sacrifice through the devotion of the groom and the Negro to the horse. He also creates a picture of man's hope, of his capacity to believe in anything if he wants to, if the belief somehow raises his standing in his own eyes, or makes life more bearable. The two seemingly opposed sides of his nature, his idealism
and his materialism, are seen to draw men to the horse and its abductors, just as the same two qualities draw the soldiers to Harry when he is a sentry in the British army.

In "The Long Summer," a section of Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, the story of Ike Snopes and his love for a cow offers a third example of the author's use of a man-beast relationship in a novel. The Ike-Cow affair is more easily separated, in one way, from the novel as a whole, than is the Theft Section from *A Fable*; yet its full meaning can only be seen, I believe, in terms of its relationship to *The Hamlet* in its entirety. But to see what Faulkner has done with this man-animal relationship, one need not, at first, consider the whole novel.

Ike Snopes is an idiot. Like Boon in "The Bear," his nature is uncivilized and sub-human, which makes him closer to the natural life around him. Yet, having a man-shape, and capable of arousing human sympathy, he can represent mankind well enough for his love for the cow to symbolize man's desire for a union with nature.

Each morning, since his first discovery of the cow, Ike has gone to the stream running through Jack Houston's land, where the cow, which belongs to Houston, comes to drink.

... He would hear the drenched myriad waking life of grasses and listen for her approach. He would hear her and he would lie drenched in the wet grass, serene and one and indivisible in joy, listening to her approach. He would smell her; the whole mist reeked with her; the same malleate hands of mist which drew along his prone drenched flanks played her pearled barrel too and shaped them both somewhere in immediate time, already married. Then he would see her; the bright thin horns of morning,
of sun, would blow the mist away and reveal her, planted, blond, dew-pearled, standing in the parted water of the ford, blowing into the water the thick, warm, heavy, milk-laden breath ... 8

Here Ike is pictured as the swain, the earthling, waiting for a glimpse of the goddess. He has fallen in love with her, and now, every morning, he comes to watch, and yearn for a union with her. Faulkner's handling of the cow-clouds the distinction between woman, goddess and animal: she is a composite of all three, a fertility image and the representation of the female principle.

Ike, however, before he can achieve the desired union (which he had tried to accomplish once and had been rebuked), must prove his worthiness and the sincerity of his desire. And his chance comes soon after the opening of the story: a brush fire starts on Houston's farm, and Ike, who is cleaning the upstairs rooms at Mrs. Littlejohn's, sees the smoke from the window. At first his mindless attempts to get out of the room, down the stairs and out onto the dirt road which will take him to Houston's place, are abortive and pathetic. But he finally gets out of the house, and is even able to make the necessary downstep, without which he would not have been able to leave the yard. This is a part of the trial: his love for the cow enables him to conquer the seemingly insuperable blocks and lack of relations of an idiot's mind.

Ike's second trial is depicted in terms of the fabled battles between the good knight and the fiery dragon—represented by Houston's stallion—who guards the imprisoned damsel:

The smoke lay like a wall before him; beyond it he could hear the steady terrified bellowing of the cow. He ran into the smoke and toward the voice. The earth was now hot to his feet. He began to snatch them quickly up; he
cried once himself, hoarse and amazed, whereupon, as though in answer, the smoke, the circumstance itself, screamed back at him. The sound was everywhere, above and beneath, funnelling downward at him; he heard the hooves and as he paused, his breath indrawn, the horse appeared, materialized furiously out of the smoke, monstrous and distorted, wild-eyed and with tossing mane, bearing down upon him. He screamed too. For an instant they yelled face to face, the wild eyes, the yellow teeth, the long gullet red with ravening gleeful triumph, stooping at him and then on as the horse swerved without breaking, the wind, the fierce dragon-reek of its passage, blasting at his hair and garments; it was gone. (174-175)

The fear-crazed horse charges at the idiot three more times; the second time Ike's fright gives him the impetus to run through the line of fire that separates him from the cow; the third time he throws himself between the on-charging horse and the cow, in a gesture of chivalry and devotion. The horse sails over their heads while "the air was filled with furious wings and the four crescent-glints of shod hooves" (176); once again the mind of the reader is drawn to dragons. The three slide down the steep bank of the ravine and land in a heap at the bottom. The horse scrambles up and continues his flight. Ike, on whom the cow has fallen, experiences his first contact with the animal, receiving "the violent relaxing of her fear-constricted bowels" (176). Faulkner substitutes what is perhaps the lowest, most basic kind of biological function or act to represent the union of the man with the animal; the union, the violation of the virgin, takes place on the most natural and instinctive level possible.

The cow attempts to flee the idiot once more, "to escape not him alone but the very scene of the outrage of privacy where she had been sprung suddenly upon and without warning from the dark and betrayed and outraged by her own treacherous biological inheritance, he
following again, speaking to her, trying to tell her how this violent violation of her maiden's delicacy is no shame, since such is the very iron imperishable warp of the fabric of love" (176). So he has passed his final test, and although she runs from him, traveling back to the familiar ford, she waits for him there, "once more maiden meditant, shame-free" (177).

Houston finds the two together in the ford. He drives the cow home, calling her a whore, and, after washing the manure from the idiot's jeans, he gives him a fifty cent piece and sends him home. On the way back, Ike, after long effort, gets the coin out of the pocket Houston had buttoned it into, and then loses it. "He made no false motion with the hand which held the coin, he had made no motion of any kind, he was standing perfectly still at the moment, yet suddenly his palm was empty. The coin rang dully once on the dusty planks and perhaps glinted once, then vanished, though who to know what motion, infinitesimal and convulsive, of supreme repudiation there might have been . . ." (180). He seemingly searches for it: "watching him you would have said he did not want to find the coin. And then you would have said, known, that he did not intend to find it . . ." (181).

Ike, as an idiot, cannot, of course, know the value of money, or even what it means. Yet he has made the same denial of mundane materialism that the groom and the ex-deputy make in the Theft Section. As long as he had kept the coin, Ike could not have returned to the cow, the coin being the price, like the thirty pieces of silver in the Bible, and in A Fable, of something that transcends monetary worth; whose being represents values beyond those of the material and mundane world.
So Ike turns around, and goes back to Houston's farm, at a time when there is no one at the place, although the idiot could not have known that there would be no one there. He takes a halter, which he has discovered by accident, puts it on the cow, and leads her away. Faulkner suggests that something--instinct, perhaps, or nature looking out for her own--aids Ike in the theft. The idiot, incapable of acting except by habitual patterns, learns "success and then precaution and secrecy and how to steal and even providence" (185) without the mental capacity required for the learning of such things.

The remainder of the story describes one of the days Ike and the cow spend together, a day of perfect peace and love. The idiot has taken the cow into the woods about five miles from Houston's place, and a half-mile from the farm of a harsh and embittered, puritanical hill farmer. Ike rises in the morning and takes a basket, which he has stolen from the farmer, and goes to the man's barn and steals some feed, leaving a tell-tale trail of spilt grain. He returns to the cow; and "within the mild enormous moist and pupilless globes he sees himself in twin miniature mirrored by the inscrutable abstraction; one with that which Juno might have looked out with, he watches himself contemplating what those who looked at Juno saw" (184-185). The cow is here definitely identified with a goddess, serene and mysterious. The relationship, placed in a natural setting, is made to seem, as was the relationship between the horse and the man in the Theft Section, a reenactment of some ancient love story, giving the impression that nature expresses herself through such relationships of "heart to heart and glands to glands" (A Fable, 152), creating a sense of a continuum
of love running throughout the tangled skein of unwound time.

Ike eats out of the basket with the cow; he has always eaten practically anything he could put in his mouth, "making but one discrimination: he is herbivorous, even the life he eats is the life of the plants" (185). Faulkner clearly indicates here that he is using Ike to represent that unity of man with nature which for ages has been held as an ideal: the desire to regain the purity and innocence that Adam and Eve enjoyed in Eden, the archetype of all pastoralism.

During the day, following the course of the sun, Ike and the cow wander through a primeval pasture land, the cow grazing slowly and the idiot entranced in his mindless world of sense impressions. They are visited by a sudden, rapid shower: "it was as if the rain were actually seeking the two of them, hunting them out where they stood amid the shade . . . the furious brief fecundation, which, still rampant, seeded itself in flash and glare of noise and fury and then was gone . . . then the actual rain, from a sky already breaking as if of its own rich over-fertile weight . . ." (187). Thus nature showers its benisons on the lovers, the saints of the life of passion and fertility. The land through which they are traveling is suffering from a severe draught (although one forgets this fact during the course of the story because of its emphasis on fertility), so that this shower marks Ike's passion and union as an act, or representative of an act, which produces a rebirth of fertility. In the sterile, arid wasteland of Houston's quenchless burning, of Flem's sterility and impotence and the peasant's bitter struggle with an unyielding earth, the idiot and the cow, nature's children, walk in a green and rain-bathed Eden.
But Ike's theft of the grain stirs up in the old, embittered farmer a wrath which has been slowly and continually burning as a result of his grueling and not-to-fruitful struggle with an unresponsive earth. The theft of the grain, in its unabashedness and insignificance, is the backbreaking straw that sets the farmer on a frenzied search for the cow and the idiot, so that he can take the cow back to Houston and receive a pound fee. To be able for once to receive something for nothing—he has not really been supporting the cow, he only finds her—will at last, in his eyes, mark a triumph on his part in a scheme of things where injustice seems to predominate.

The cow is thus returned, with the idiot following behind, tragic and moaning. Houston finds that, despite himself, he is acting once again out of pity and contempt for Ike's love of the cow: he takes the cow to Mrs. Littlejohn's so Ike can be with the animal, can have the one thing which has meaning for him in his idiot's world.

But Ike's world of joy does not last long: Lump Snopes makes his barnyard home into a peepshow, and Ratliff, unable to allow passion to be turned into the lowest form of prostitution, shuts up the show, and has the cow slaughtered. Ike is left in mourning, moaning over the carved figure of a cow another of his cousins, Eck Snopes, gives him out of pity for the idiot's sorrow.

Faulkner, as has been pointed out above, has sought to depict in the relationship of Ike and the cow, a union of man with nature. It is in terms of the whole novel, however, that the reason for presenting such a union becomes clear:

The presentation of Flem as an emotional zero is the con-
trolling principle in the structure of *The Hamlet*. Each character and incident in the novel serves as a moral or emotional contrast to Flem. The most dramatic and effective contrast is the character of Eula Varner. The marriage of Flem and Eula unites the epitome of human frigidity with the epitome of human passion. Eula is the fertility goddess, the symbol of that passion in the human being that fixes him in the continuum of nature."

The story of Ike and the cow is related to the story of Eula. "In the descriptions of Eula, her bovine qualities are emphasized". . . . In both stories "the allusions to classical fertility myths abound, and the idiot's pursuit of the cow symbolizes the human being's unity with nature." The story of Labove and his relationship with Eula parallels the Ike-Cow affair.

"Altogether, there are five stories of irresistible passion in the two middle sections (entitled "Eula" and "The Long Summer"), which are enclosed by two sections which deal more directly with Flem's manipulation of others for profit. Houston's story is one of tragic love. . . . Mink's story is more than a love tale, although love plays an important role in it." These stories of passion, and the later story of Flem's besting Ratliff and Henry Armstid's greed form an isolating circle about the static and dispassionate Flem. "Flem is isolated by his lack of emotional response. His heart is a dollar sign; his goal is the accumulation of money, and his tools are human beings whose emotions he does not share and can therefore manipulate for his financial profit . . . . It is not Flem's shrewdness in barter that defeats men and the devil; it is his immunity to feeling."

Volpe's comments point out the relationship of the Ike-Cow story to the theme of human passion in the novel. But there is another theme that runs through the book, a steady undercurrent that can be felt in
many of Faulkner's works: the relationship of man to the land. Eula and the cow, and their attendants, Hoake and Ike, represent the fertile, fecund aspect of nature, of the land; that nourishing and loamy life one experiences most of all in the early summer. They stand in contrast to the stubborn and intractable earth, the nerve-tearing existence of the hill-farmers, the peasants, who supply the main cast of characters for *The Hamlet*. When Eula leaves Frenchman's Bend with her sterile spouse, the land undergoes a severe draught, as if she were Persephone and Flem were Pluto. This draught is broken, in the mind of the reader, when Faulkner creates a fertile Eden for Ike and his cow to wander through. It is actually broken by that short burst of rain which falls like an acknowledgement, a response to, the passion, the union with natural forces that Ike and the cow represent. Although the style of the Ike-Cow section is not expressly so, the story can be seen as an ironic comment on the situation in Frenchman's Bend. An idiot's love for a cow is the only substitute the hamlet can offer to fill the gap left by the departure of the goddess, Eula.

The fertility-sterility themes take one to Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and then back to the classical fertility myths. Faulkner has developed from these, and from other stories found in past romantic literature, the images to depict the relationship between Ike and the cow. Thus depicted, their story complements and contrasts the story of Flem and of the strange power of Snopesism, whose growth is not based in nature, or on natural forces, but on a distortion of human nature and man's materialism, which of all his characteristics, most sets him apart, cuts him off, from nature, from the land.