CONCLUSION

We began by exploring the changes in the structure of madness and violence from realism and symbolism, through semi-fabulation to fabulation. We discovered that categories like Sharon Spencer's[1] open and closed forms, may apply to modernist mythopoeic literature but not to fabulation in which there is no hemming-in of material as in myth. We also discovered that rigid distinctions between naturalism and fabulation cannot be sustained between author and author because certain fabulist tendencies are anticipated by writers like Faulkner and especially Ellison. The difference is that in Faulkner history which is scrambled in Absalom, Absalom! through cinematic cross-cutting is the history of individual characters. But outside the work is the history of the South to which the narrative offers four referential submissions whereas in fabulation the number of submissions can be interminable, as we have seen. In Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, for instance, fragments of history from the nineteenth century, early twentieth century, World War II, are all jumbled-up and overlap. Ellison makes extensive use of fabulation as we have seen in the race-riot scene.

Within the work of the fabulists themselves one discerns a shift from naturalism to fabulation. Irving actually moves backward from fabulation toward realism.

One could perhaps think in evolutionary terms as forms
evolve from fiction to fiction instead of in historical
phases. The clubbing together of Heller, Pynchon, Vonnegut,
Barth, seems unrealistic because Heller and Ellison share
the vision of the humanists while employing the technique of
the fabulists.

As we went ahead we saw that the meaning of violence
and madness gets extended and in the works of the fabulists
new meanings of these terms are generated. Violence and madness
are no longer matters of individual psychic aberrations as in
Faulkner or socially begotten evils as in Steinbeck. In the
works of the semi-fabulists and fabulists they seem to
represent general or contemporary collective malaise. Benjy
is an idiot stumbling though the world of the sane while in
fabulation even the form suggests chaos.

One of the central concerns of this dissertation has been
to see what happens to the structure of violence and madness
as the form gets more and more abstracted and the characters
change from sharply etched individuals to faceless cyphers.
While one does encounter certain tendency toward abstraction
as one moves from realism to fabulation in that everything
gets generalized, the notion that abstraction dilutes the
impact of violence and madness was found to be misleading.

While the realists rely on social fact and history gets
entwined in Faulkner's characters, the work of the humanists,

Bellow and Malamud, shows that violence and madness are no longer a simple physical act. They get assimilated to language and reappear as structural incarnation.

At this point we might pause to take stock of how much of contemporary intellectual background is implicated in the works of these writers. Although we have pointed out a number of saliencies between the works of Fromm, Foucault, Laing, Honderich, Whyte and a host of other intellectuals, and the works of the novelists we have considered, we are not claiming influence of the former on the latter. We are not even suggesting a cross-fertilizing relationship between the two. It is more the sharing of common intellectual assumptions which in the former are encoded in discursive terms, in the latter in artistic form.

As we claimed in the Introduction, we have made a modest attempt to employ certain post-structural critical notions for making formal distinctions between the works of the semi-fabulists and the fabulists. The work of Todorov and to a certain extent, Edward Said, proved to be extremely useful. They helped determine choices made by writers who wanted either a humanistic resolution within a fabulist frame and by the fabulists who allow their characters to dissipate into "comic nihilstic" cyphers.[2]

Our analysis of fabulist discourse toward the end of Chapter Four and Five very clearly indicates the almost awesome

presence of carnal imagery which creates a sense of menace. Under the pressures produced by this menace all our certainties, apocalyptic or otherwise, get pulverized. Whether the form is aleatory or closed, there is no reining in of the sense of horror, specially in Hawkes. In his writing the fear of the unknown is not exorcised through a Barth-like playfulness of tone or a Vonnegut-like irony.

There are further distinctions we have noticed and similarities which cut across historical boundaries. We have defined the difference in the treatment of madness and violence between Pynchon, Barth and Vonnegut, on the one hand and Hawkes on the other, by claiming that the former enclose their concerns in ideological forms whereas Hawkes registers them through the apprehension that these categories are rooted in man's biological condition. Even so, in all their work, the rhetoric mitigates the excesses of formal abstractions by referring the reader either to a historical or human referent as so many discursive submissions to a central all embracing vision.

We have also postulated a certain intellectual kinship between Foucault, Fromm and the semi-fabulists and fabulists, and between Hawkes and Artaud which - while being arbitrary since no actual evidence of influence can be adduced - helps in reinforcing the central argument of this thesis, namely, that modern American fiction is rooted in contingent experience even if its formal properties do not reflect this mimetically.

In conclusion we can say that both spatial and temporal
techniques in the works of the semi-fabulists and fabulists
are oriented toward the dissolution of the known categories
of violence and madness through a comic-cruel symbiosis. This
symbiosis while compelling a redefinition ofnviolence and
madness produces not a negation of the contingent but a
restructuring of it in rhetorical terms which make both
categories impervious to explanation.

NOTES

1   Sharon Spencer. Space, Time and Structure in the Modern
     Novel (New York:New York University Press, 1971).

2   Gerhard Hoffmann, "Social Criticism and the Deformation
     of Man:Satire, the Grotesque and Comic Nihilism in the
     Modern and Postmodern American Novel", American Studies/
     Amerikastudien, 28, 2 (1983).