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English Language.

**Moving Forward , Looking Backward : Past , Tragedy , Trauma
and Redemption in the Major Works of William Faulkner , the
Salient Representative of the Southern Reality .**

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Dedication

To my parents who proudly supported my educational endeavours .

To my brother and sisters for their constant support and pride in my accomplishments .

To my dear friends who provided prayers .

To my loving colleagues who brought confidence and hope in me .

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In the name of our Merciful and Compassionate God

“ My lord ! increase me in knowledge ”

(The Holy Quran , the Chapter of Taha , Versus 114)

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Abstract

It is a truth generally acknowledged that the South is more distinctively a region than any other portion of the United States is. Far more important than its geographical boundaries are the boundaries of experience and tradition which have given it a unique identity in the nation. Indeed, it is a region and people of rich, yet tumultuous history, devastated by slavery, violent racism, corruption, poverty and the Civil War (1861-1865). Since the early days of the United States, The US South depended heavily on the past to constitute an identity. This perpetuation until the present days uses common motifs, images and symbols. For a deeper understanding of Southern literature and culture, it is necessary to understand their drawing on the past and the reasons thereof, and to fully understand the peculiar Southern situation. As a native Mississippian, the flagship and the master of Southern literature, William Faulkner is one of the major representatives of the Southern reality who succeeded to explore the wonderful literary heritage of his hometown. Departing from the South, the centre of this examination is a Southern subject *par excellence*. The present study seeks to cast light on the ever-reappearing topic of the past overshadowing the present and determining the future. A persistent urge to look back and a serious reluctance to move forward are one of Faulkner's chief concerns and are omnipresent in his fiction.

Résumé

C'est une vérité généralement reconnue que le Sud des Etats-Unis est une région caractéristique en ce sens qu'elle a donné une identité unique à cette nation. Bien plus important que ses frontières géographiques, sont les frontières de l'expérience et de la tradition qui lui ont façonné une identité singulière dans la nation des Etats-Unis. En effet, c'est un espace qui a offert des richesses à sa population mais aussi une tumultueuse histoire, dévastée par l'esclavage, le racisme, la corruption, la pauvreté, la guerre civile (1861-1865). Dès la naissance des Etats-Unis, le Sud dépendait fortement de son passé pour construire une identité. Cette consolidation a de tout temps utilisé des motifs, des images et des symboles communs. Pour une compréhension profonde de la littérature et de la culture du Sud, il est nécessaire de comprendre leur ancrage dans leur histoire et de cerner la situation particulière du Sud. Originaire du Mississippi, William Faulkner est l'un des principaux représentants de la littérature du Sud qui a réussi à explorer le merveilleux patrimoine littéraire de sa ville natale. En partant du Sud, cette étude tourne autour du thème du passé toujours si tenace, jusqu'à éclipser le présent et rendant ainsi l'avenir complexe. Un besoin persistant de regarder en arrière et une sérieuse réticence à avancer sont les principales préoccupations de William Faulkner dépeintes brillamment dans sa fiction.

ملخص

مما لا يبرأ فيه أنّ الجنوب منطقة متميّزة في جزء من أجزاء و. م. أ أهم وأكثر من رُقعتهما وحُدودها الجُغرافية؛ مُتمثلة في حُدود الخبرة والتقاليد والأعراف التي أكسبتها سحنةً فريدة، وهويةً مُتقرّدة. إنّها منطقة ثرية وشعب غنيّ مُتشرّب بتاريخ عريق دمّرتة الحروب والكوارث والفقر و أغرقه الفساد السياسيّ والغنصريّة المُجحفة. مُنذُ الوطأة الأولى للوم. أركن الجنوب الأمريكيّ إلى ماضيه التليد بشكل كبيرٍ ليُلوّرة هويّته، وتُشكيل عرقه، مُستأيفاً ومُستمرّاً إلى العصر الحاليّ مُستخدماً الرّخارف والصُور والرّموز المُتداولة. من أجل فهم أدقّ وأعمق لتثقافة وأدب الجنوب الأمريكيّ كان لزاماً على الدارسين سبّر أغوار رُسوماتهم واستكناه الأسباب، ومُعاشة الحالة الجنوبيّة الخاصة. وليام فولكنر - مُواطننا من مسيسيبي - يُعدُّ بحقّ أدبياً ومُؤرّخاً رائداً للأدب الجنوبيّ كيف لا؛ وهو واحد من المُمثّلين الفاعلين والمعاشين للواقع الجنوبيّ الذي غاص في استكشاف التراث الأدبيّ من مسقط رأسه " الأديب ابن بيئته". البدء و الانطلاقة من الجنوب مرتبط ومركز هذه الدراسة التي نسعى من خلالها إلى تسليط الضوء على موضوع الماضي الذي استُحدثت و بُعثت من جديد مُلقياً بظلاله على الواقع الحاضر راسماً للمستقبل. إنّ الإصرار المُستمرّ للنظر إلى الخلف والتردّد الجادّ في المُضيّ قُدماً هما تُنائية أخذت من إهتمام أدب فولكنر حيزاً هاماً، وشملت مساحة واسعة من مؤلفاته نلمسه ونستقرئه في جُلّ رواياته.

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General

Introduction

The American South , with one foot in the present and the other in the past , has always been a powerful and salient point of reference . As it has long been a topic of fascination and study to the rest of the world . The US South has always been considered as a region of many faces . From the time when the first ship landed in what would become Virginia to the time of the Civil War and to the present day , the American South has been many things : a frontier , a colony , a region , and a nation .

Unlike any other portion within the United States , the US South is a distinctive American region which has undertaken a series of events and experiences . These experiences have taught it attitudes sharply at variance with some of the standard American beliefs ; among these attitudes are the sense of failure , which comes from being the only group of Americans who have known military defeat , military occupation and seemingly unconquerable poverty , and a sense of guilt , which comes from having been a part of America's classic symbol of injustice , the enslavement and exploitation of the Blacks .

The South's historical context is almost infinitely complex , and to simplify it to the short statement is to do it the gravest violence , yet it is something like this : The South once knew an order and a tradition based on honour , purity , and personal integrity , yet it was guilty of the exploitation of fellow human beings , the Indians and the Blacks . Because of this great guilt came the Civil War like a ' flaming sword' and ended the paradise of the noble, but guilty past . Therefore , it was after the Civil War that the region fell-into the darkness of moral decay . When the war ended in 1865 the defeated South lay in ruin . After a failed Reconstruction , Southerners struggled to pick up the pieces . Completely devastated by war , natural disaster , political anarchy , racial brutality , disease and poverty . To this end , Southerners were left with an exhausted land , a lost cause , a broken ideology and excessive violence , and this is the environment in which William Faulkner lived.

Almost most of the American writers have a highly literary luggage . With reference to William Faulkner , one would say that he provided the national literary world with a strong literary heritage that is deemed as an exceptional yet an exquisite of the American written art. Faulkner's literary wealth contributed enormously to the American literature , his powerful literary productions are worth to be mentioned , most notably his novels. Accordingly , " Faulkner is always rated among the principal American novelists of the twentieth century , and in some circles , especially in Europe , he is placed ahead of all others"¹

¹ Albert H. Morehead , Harold J , Blum. 100 Great American Novels . New American Library : First Edition . New York.1996

While William Faulkner's contemporary Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) , an American journalist , storywriter and novelist was part American part cosmopolitan , William Faulkner was part American part Southern . In fact , most of William Faulkner's literary creations are deeply and strongly rooted in Southern land , history and society which reveal to a large extent his deep attachment and strong devotion to his hometown. It is thanks to this region that is regarded as the door that led all him all the way to eminence .

Moreover , William Faulkner holds a crucial position because his situation is typical for the tension and strain the Southern author felt and still feels . There is no coincidence that Faulkner addresses American themes and subjects , but is sure to come back to his country's great division : The Civil War and its aftermath . The South he and the authors who followed him portray presents itself as through the war was not over , yet . Violence permeates everything : marriages , attitudes , racial relations and conflicts of all kinds .

In the same spirit , William Faulkner affirms that Southern writers want to tell about the South . They are in a desperate need to explain their lives , their works , their image of themselves , and all of it outside of the framework that the rest of the country had built up around them. The Southern author needs the South like it needs him or her , Faulkner being one of its pre-eminent representatives admits the high potential of autobiographical influences of the South's authors thusly : “ Because it is himself the Southern writer is writing about , the writer unconsciously writes into every line and phrases his violent despairs , rages and frustrations or his violent prophesies of still more violent hopes.”¹

The storm of literary controversy about William Faulkner is not likely to diminish with his death . It is of essence to note that no other twentieth century American writer seems to have provoked as much criticism as Faulkner has . Paradoxically , his writing is so profusely analyzed not necessarily because it is the most valuable , but rather because many critics perceive it to be puzzling , complex and perplexingly uneven . Indeed , many of the most firmly established critics of literature were deeply impressed by the stark and sombre power of his writing . As a matter of fact , his writings are packed with powerful issues and commentary that it is difficult to choose an angle in which to read him.

Since the dawn of his literary career , William Faulkner's works have attracted the attention of many critics which multiplied by hundreds after the conferring of the Nobel Prize

¹ Weston , Ruth D. Barry Hannah , Post Modern Romantic . Baton Rouge , LA : Louisiana State University Press.1998 , p28

on him . Numerous modern critics and researchers have studied William Faulkner's fiction from different angles . Yearly conferences on Faulkner's works is a regular phenomenon . It is worthy of note to state that what allowed the writings of Faulkner to be victorious over others at a certain period of time is his attempt to echo and mirror his hometown's reality as it is , rather than just trying to make it a kind of a look-like picture .

As a further matter , William Faulkner belonged to that era of the twentieth century which witnessed the maximum disturbance . Each decade appeared with a new spirit and trouble . The first decade had the essence of the old world and the second decade brought the great storm of World War I. The third decade witnessed the emergence of a new world and the fourth decade brought World War II which resulted in decay , disintegration and alienation. The fifth decade was an effort to create a new world . These turbulent historical events influenced the sensibility of various writers , Faulkner included , as most of them participated in wars .

To understand William Faulkner , one should first understand the Southern mind. Examining the Southern conception of history , culture and traditions opens the door to the issues and concerns that Faulkner himself encountered and engaged both personally and as a writer during his life . The latter made a fantastic use of his imagination , his adept listening and telling skills to engage the Southern mind not as a passive member of the society , but as a critical being actively pursuing resolution and understanding of his own heritage and his homeland's past .

By documenting and painting some of the strongest images of his hometown , William Faulkner invites the readers to analyze how the truth of history should be dealt with and shows that the present is still deeply rooted within the injustices of the past . He believes in the significant importance of one's historical past and gives most of his writings gothic settings, reflecting the decaying state of the South . In point of fact , historians are usually distrustful of fictional accounts of the past . They expend a good deal of energy trying to undo the influence of novels , movies and other popular influences on the historical consciousness of the American public . Faulkner's vision of the past , on the other hand , is quite divergent . Because he is a remarkably astute historian, not as a factually accurate researcher , but as an intuitive interpreter of his people and their past.

In 1925 , Sherwood Anderson¹ gave William Faulkner that universally writing advice of 'write what you know' , when he encouraged him to write his life in his hometown of

¹ Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) is an American writer whose writings had a weighty impact on Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner , both of whom owe the first publications of their books to his efforts .

Oxford saying “ you’re a country boy , all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from . But that’s alright too , that’s America too”¹ Faulkner ultimately heeded Anderson’s advice .

William Faulkner is certainly at his most popular when he is writing about his ‘ own little postage stamp of native soil’ and there is undoubtedly a reason why these stories are still constantly being studied to this day . Southerners have been looking to Faulkner for their own stories for generations and have used his narratives as a basis for their own for just as long . It can be stated that William Faulkner’s works went a long way towards voicing the literary narrative of the American South in the twentieth century . He echoed stories that might otherwise be untold , stories about people like poor sharecroppers and lonely widows and gaining national attention and a place in the American literary canon that showed that his stories were not just stories of the South. They were stories of a sort of universal significance, and though taking them out of the overall image of the South removes important context and certainly people of Faulkner’s time and his region have a special hold on them , they also have importance outside of that context to Southerners and non Southerners , to writers and readers alike. By and large , William Faulkner is often regarded as a sort of cultural gatekeeper of the South .

In an interview given by William Faulkner during the 1957-1958 academic year at the Virginia University , reveals one of his vital ideas that is essential in order to understand his style. According to William Faulkner , man cannot escape the past , for “ he is the sum of his past ...It is a part of every man , every woman , and every moment . All of his and her ancestry , background , is all a part of himself and herself at any moment .”² He considers the past as co-dependent foundations of being . His writings show much evidence of employing the past manifested in characters , philosophy and action . Many of his characters have been placed in an atmosphere where they are associated with the past . The colourful Eudora Welty (1909-2001) - one of the most notable American Southern writers - asserts that man cannot escape the past for man’s present is a continuum of time , past and present . The past is an entangled part of the present . She emphasizes that remembering is an essential and a vital element of staying alive.

It is only natural that William Faulkner , whose roots are so deeply imbedded in Mississippi , writes of what is his natural heritage : the South , and more particularly , that part of the South around Oxford . Using his own family history and gathering a fund of

¹ Hines Thomas . William Faulkner and The Tangible Past :The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha . University of California . Los Angeles .1997 , p 11

² Gwynn , Fredrick Landis and Blotner , Joseph Leo. Faulkner in the University , University of Virginia Press.USA.1995 , p84

material from local courthouse and plantation records , word of mouth stories from tenant farmers and blacks, William Faulkner creates a brilliant , if often pessimistic , legend . This legend is not of the usual romantic South , but is rather a realistic probing of the social structure of the South .

Furthermore , the economic pattern of the US South had been agrarian , and it was bolstered by the institution of slavery . In order to compete with the North , the agrarian structure is being gradually replaced by one based on industry . This gradual evolution of the South is regarded by William Faulkner with great misgivings . It represents to him not only a loss of fundamental values which he , as an heir of aristocrats or traditional way of life , cherishes . Though William Faulkner regards the future with a qualified optimism , his favour seems to rest with the past . However, he is fair-minded and realistic enough to realize that the old traditional way of life was doomed , that it is held within its the seeds of its own destruction , and that these seeds were embodied in the institution of slavery and in man's exploitation and eventual destruction of the land he owned . These two points are continually reiterated by William Faulkner in his effort to explain the predicament of the South .

The Southern identity that will be presented in the first place historically , literally and culturally is one of great pride , grief and guilt. It is an identity that has its foundations in a longing , melancholic and also stubborn look to the past . It becomes the major reference for Southern self-definition and demarcation . This Southern picture and culture of untiring remaining in and insisting on one's position , may it be good or bad , is deeply and strongly rooted in the past . It is perpetuated and handed down from on generation to the other . White Southerners still turn to their past and heritage to define their present identity ; whereas Afro-Americans will hardly look back to the days before the Civil War with other feelings than resentment and endless sadness .

The answers to the questions where this longing , melancholic living in the past lie , are of utter importance to reach a deeper understanding of both Southern literature and culture of the last century and the present . Both the historical and cultural circumstances create a very fertile breeding ground for a unique type of literature in the sense that they form , define and distinguish it , setting it apart from literature from other parts of the United States .

To better understand the core of this work , the context in which Faulkner lived has to be elaborated at the beginning , in the sense that the context plays an outsized role in the creation of his fiction , more notably Faulkner's novels as they are the product of his habitation in the Southern society . More than this , they can be regarded as testaments of the Southern history and the socio-economic circumstances that shaped the Southern identity and

produced a view point of the South as a separate nation . Departing from the South , my approach is two-fold : in the first place , readers are invited to take a literary journey to Faulkner's native soil because embarking on a project on the study of Southern literature requires a thoughtful understanding of William Faulkner's South. Then , along the way , readers are going to investigate the mark of time by examining the historical and cultural features of the region which are of utter importance to reach a deeper understanding of the themes of society and history in Faulkner's fiction .

In the second chapter , a careful attention will be paid to the mythical stage "Yoknapatawpha County" William Faulkner created where he could employ his aesthetical experiments freely without any restriction . As the latter emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction period , Southerners were often torn between a new and an older , more established world order . Most of the time , the culture of the American South was " inward-turning" , " backward-looking". This offered an image of massive immobility , while people were fixed on moral values and gentility at the same time , William Faulkner painted this unchangeableness .

It is of essence to speak of Faulkner's fictive space in greater length so that to get a grander insight into Faulkner's deep attachment and commitment to his fictional county which is modelled after the real life county that he grew up in . Understanding the fabrication of Yoknapatawpha helps (us) understand Faulkner's perception of art . Therefore , it is of great importance to understand the author in order to understand his text as it is of utmost significance to understand context so that to understand the text and Yonapatawpha County is the context of nearly most of Faulkner's cycle of fiction

The journey through Faulkner's fiction continues with another chapter that attempts to cast light on a fundamental issue related to the South's end of an order . Being a native Mississippian , William Faulkner has been able to notice the great gap the war made between the greatness of the agrarian pre-war American South and the corruption of the same society hereafter . Some of Faulkner's novels render the corruption of the Southern aristocracy after the destruction of its wealth and way of life during the Civil War . Beneath the shadow of the old grandeur , these families attempt to cling to the old Southern values and codes that are corrupted and out of place in the reality of the modern world . The families in William Faulkner's fictional world are rife with irresponsible parents , failed sons and disgraced daughters .

To explore this subject matter , William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* will be carefully analyzed . It renders artfully and masterfully his region's painful decadence

in terms of loss of values and moral principles .The themes that connote the South's lack of a moral centre are painted through the brutal and exceedingly passionate nature of William Faulkner's successful selection of characters " the Compsons" who crystallize not only the decay of the Southern morality , but mainly the collapse of a complete social order .

As this thesis moves forward to the last chapter , another attempt is made bringing to the surface a further pre-eminent point related to William Faulkner's sense of optimism in his fiction. It is plainly evident to state that Faulkner writes of violence , of human folly , of greed, of a brooding sense of evil in the universe , yet in the midst of all this dark turmoil gleams a light . In pain , sorrow , conflict , degeneration and loss , Faulkner sees a chance , a possibility to gain better knowledge of life. Man's prevailing and his ability to endure in spite of the world's tragedies , is a significant theme that holds the lion's share in William Faulkner's body of fiction . The characters which exemplify this theme provide the positive force in William Faulkner's works. A study of these characters , that William Faulkner refers to as the benevolent primitives unveils a philosophy of life that looks beyond suffering to hope.

The present research work will be divided into four main chapters . The first chapter takes as its primary function to provide the reader with an engaging historical and cultural tour to Faulkner's native soil . The second chapter , on the other hand , will be devoted to draw an overall image on the Nobel Prize Winning Faulkner's imaginary kingdom which is considered as a universal recognized literary landscape that provides the setting of various of his fiction . Furthermore , the third chapter is an attempt to depict the collapse of the salient and ethical moral conducts and values that used to form the backbone of the Southern morality . Consequently , the deterioration of such concepts and mores after the Civil War had a weighty effect on the psyche of the South in general , and Faulkner in particular .The fourth chapter finally is dedicated to highlight the possibility of the South to go forward by cleaning its mess and getting a chance for redemption . This is apparent in the ringing optimism Faulkner foreshadows throughout a thoughtful selection of characters who in spite of the tragedy which surrounds them , find peace and personal fulfilment . These individuals illuminate Faulkner's philosophy that mankind can withstand any sorrow and still face life heroically.

The voyage from chapter one to four is thus a journey through Faulkner's world that allows for some answers . In order to fulfil the aims of the research , several matters will be addressed and tackled . Indeed , an attempt will be made to light up the influence of the South's tragic past on its psyche and literature and to what extent the use of the past has a

crucial role in the formation of Faulkner's fiction. Then , a special attention will be drawn to the different devices employed by Faulkner to render the state of the South and to elucidate , on the other hand , the reasons that are at the origin of William Faulkner's fabrication of a fictional space . Another essential element which is of significant interest is to cast light on the South's chance for redemption and what really prevents the latter from moving forward .

Chapter One

William Faulkner's Native Soil and the Mark of Time

Introduction

The American South has long been a topic of fascination and study to the rest of the world . It is a region and people of rich , yet tumultuous history , devastated by war , poverty , natural disaster , political corruption , and violent racism . Regardless of its glory or brokenness , it is a region worth studying . In point of fact , the South rose to power in the nineteenth century as a region of economic prosperity built upon the wildly successful plantation system , which used mass slave labour to grow and produce cotton : the ultimate cash crop that put the region on the global market .

Furthermore , the plantation system defined the region's social hierarchy . Wealthy white planters controlled the politics , economy, and strict social order. While the rest of the country was advancing quickly towards urbanization and industrialization , the South , on the other hand , chose to remain firmly agrarian . Yet , the Southern planters were fighting a losing battle with the federal government for control over their slaves , and thus , their livelihoods . After eleven states seceded from the union in 1861 and the American Civil War began , many white Southerners went to fight not only for the protection of slavery , but also for a way of life they had always known and cherished . What would life be like for Southerners with no mass labour system , no social order , and no effective politics ? When the war ended in 1865 the defeated South lay in ruin . After a failed Reconstruction , Southerners struggled to pick up the pieces .

William Faulkner grew up in the South , and of the South . He was born in Mississippi, of a distinguished family which had included governors and generals and one man of letters after two years at the University of Mississippi , Faulkner joined the Canadian Flying Corps where he gained the rank of lieutenant , and saw service in France , bringing down two enemy planes , and himself suffering two crashes , in one of which his foot was heavily injured . Later on , he returned to his homeland : Oxford , Mississippi , where he has lived ever since . Indeed , he has not cut himself off from his roots ; instead he has attempted to penetrate and utilize those aspects of life presented him by heritage and circumstance .

A celebrated writer in his time , Faulkner wrote boldly about issues in the South and his writings went against the grain of traditional Southern writers . In point of fact , his works challenge the white Southern beliefs that clung tightly to remembering the pre-Civil War South. Instead of reminiscing the past , Faulkner unashamedly casts light on issues within the region caused by the South's bloody history .

Moreover , his works went on to be made into screenplays and even won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949 . The historian Don Doyle points out , “ Faulkner’s view of history was more tragic than nostalgic . He saw the Southern past as a burden on his people, carrying with it sins so profound that the past constituted a curse that hung over the land , inherited by one generation after another”¹ Faulkner shatters many traditional Southern ideals of white supremacy , the Lost Cause , and the belief that the region must be restored to its former glory . For him , it is a land running with blood .

The introductory chapter prefaces the context for Faulkner’s work , suggesting that he, along with other writers of the period responded to challenging realities . Indeed , this chapter takes as its starting point to introduce the reader to Faulkner’s native soil : the American South because embarking on a project on the study of Southern literature requires a thoughtful understanding of Faulkner’s South in the sense that his novels have a wide base in Southern history and present-day society . In addition to this , this chapter focuses largely on the way Faulkner blends his native history with his fictional portrayal of the key events that played a crucial role in the history of the US South .

¹ Doyle Don . Faulkner’s County : The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha . Chapel Hills , NC . The University of North Carolina Press , 2001. p18

1. William Faulkner's South

*“ Tell about the South . What’s it like there . What do they do there . Why do they live there .
Why do they live at all ”*¹

*“ You can’t understand it . You would have to be born there ”*²

The notion of “the American South” – antebellum South or postbellum South , Old South or New South – brings to mind a whole span of responses , representations , and images . On the one hand , the South is always portrayed as romantic , old , gracious , aristocratic , classical , elevated , or glamorous . Its landmark is a white column mansion set on a hill in a grove of oaks and hickories , ash and maples , surrounded by gardens full of roses , lilacs , magnolias , and honeysuckle , with cotton plantations and servants ‘cabins in the kground.³ On the mansion’s porch sits a gentleman , behind him an angelic wife , both observing children playing . The second set of images quite associated with the South – centuries of economic and sexual exploitation , the bloody struggle for racial desegregation , racism , and the rigid system of race , gender , and class roles challenges to which usually did not end well – bears little resemblance to the idyllic picture described above calling attention to its violent , evil , racist , multiple , grotesque , and backward side .

To summarize the South and its literature is to enter a highly charged fray . Several scholars of the region have been probing and questioning the meaning of “ Southernness” for many decades . Yet the first decades of the 21st century have witnessed a surge in the dismantling of what is called “ the South ”, especially within the field of new Southern studies. This conversation , in Martyn Bones’ words , has been a “ seemingly endless and often anxious discourse around distinctiveness ” producing a diverse array of perspectives on the region called the South⁴ .

¹ Hughes Richard . Absalom Absalm !!. Vintage Books. London .1993.p 174

² Ibid , 361

³ The description provided is inspired by Thomas Nelson Page’s Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War (1893) which tries to capture a bit of the Old south’s allure as it has been painted in popular literature and culture .

⁴ Martyn Bone , « Introduction : Old/New/Post/Real/Global/1no south : Paradigms and Scales, » in Creating and Consuming the American south , ed.Martin Bone , Bria Ward and William A.Link (Gainesville : University of Florida Press , 2015) p 1

At one end of the spectrum , Jon Smith argues that “the South” is a meaningless term, naming nothing but fantasies .¹ Scott Romine argues that “ the idea of the South has mostly been a bad idea.”² And Tara McPherson says that “ Southernness should not always be our starting point .”³ Put differently , Barbara Ladd says that “ dismantle(ing) the monolith of a solid , unified Southern United States” is of great significance and utmost importance , On the other hand , Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer argue that the South “ emerges as an in-between space , a process , an agenda [...] an idea , a relational concept in a global context.”⁴ However , another strain of Southern studies continues to dig deeper into the roots and soil of the region , revealing the lingering qualities , histories and phenomena so particular to this place⁵.

In his introduction to a collection of manifestos on the US South , Michael P. Bibler helpfully summarizes : “ Maybe you see a block of red states . But many scholars interested in literary and cultural studies of the Southern United States begin with the assumption that there is no such thing a solid South.”⁶ The South , for Bibler and many others , is a porous , slippery , and multitudinous part of the United States . Emphasizing the plurality of the region , Bibler states “ There are native Souths , queer Souths , black Souths , Latin Souths , global Souths , immigrant Souths , revolutionary Souths , experimental Souths , Undead Souths”⁷ and so on – the list continues for another eight lines of the paragraph .Bibler is clear , therefore , that the South throughout its history , the region has been thought of in distinct terms : it is seen even to this day in a wide range of cultural texts and discourses , as exceptional within the larger nation . Various incarnations of Southern exceptionalism – “ the fantasy that the South is historically and culturally unique in the nation”⁸ – have survived into the twenty first century , yet it is clear that the aspects typically associated with the South (slavery , segregation , racism , among other things) obviously are part of the larger nation as well.

Accordingly , mention “ the South ” and a catalogue of stereotypes typically comes to mind . More often than not , the South is considered wild , backward , violent , perverse and

¹ Jon Smith .Finding Purple America : The South and the Future of American cultural Studies (Athens : University of Georgia Press , 2013) p22

² Scott Romine . « God and the MoonPie : Consumption, Disenchantment , and the Reliably Lost Cause,» in Creating and Consuming the American South, p63

³ Tara McPherson , « Afterword : After Authenticity, » in Creating and Consuming the American South, p321

⁴ Barbara Ladd , « Literary studies : The Southern United States , 2005 » PMLA 120.4 (2006), 1636.

⁵ Kathryn McKee and annette Trefzer,» Preface ; GlobalContexts , Local Literatures : The New Southern Studies”. American Literature 78.4 (2006) 682

⁶ See , for example , Thadious M.Davis , Southernscapes : Geographies of Race , Region and Literature (Chapel Hill : University of north Carolina Press , 2011) , and Christopher Lloyd . Rooting Memory , Rooting Place : Regionalism in the Twenty-First-Century American South (New York Palgrave Macmillan , 2015)

⁷ Michael P.Bibler , “ Introduction : Smash the Mason-Dixon ! or , Manifesting the United States” , PMLA 131.1 (2016) ; p53

⁸ Ibid .

this is the image that a number of southern writers , critics and historians have helped to perpetuate . In his influential work , *The History of Southern Literature* , Louis Rubin provides a comprehensive description whereby he cites Woodward's assertion that :

The South's distinctiveness is rooted in its having had a different historical experience from the nation at large ; where America has known only success and affluence , the South has known failure , defeat and poverty ; where the nation has thrived on its myth of innocence , the South has experienced , in the awful burden of slavery , the reality of evil and a sense of guilt ; where the country as a whole has been optimistic and secure in its progressivist creed , the South's historical experience has generated pessimism in Southerners , an awareness of the limitations of the human condition , and a realization that everything one wants to do cannot be accomplished . ¹

As Woodward points out , the South has a long history of violence , one that has indeed contributed to its association with what Teresa Goddu refers to as gothic doom and gloom . On the other hand , Eudora Welty , one of the South's most prominent women writers, when asked to comment on history , she claimed that it “ tells us worse things”² than fiction and certainly Southern history in particular seems even to tell us far worse things than American history in general .

As the critic Richard Gray too confirms , the South's association with violence and depravity is linked with its having undergone “ a process of transition ... marked by considerable turmoil and ugliness”³ . One of the most obvious products of this process : its literature . A jumbled array of poems , stories and novels that have “ fixed the image of the South in art”⁴ and in the minds of people the world over have come “ along with and directly out of the turmoil and even the violence of the changing South”⁵ . Indeed , the Southern writers seem almost incapable of ignoring the troubled history of their region : as Lewis P. Simpson remarks in *The Fable of Southern Writer* , Southerners in general and Southern writers in particular are inclined to see their lives as “ always in a dramatic tension with history ... accepting such a vision of the past –out of fear , it may be said , of the alienation of

¹ Rubin Louis. *The History of Southern Literature*. Louisiana State University Press. Baton Rouge . 1985 ; 425

² Harrison Suzan. *Eudora Welty and Virginia Woolf Gender , Genre and Influence* . Louisiana State University Press. Baton Rouge .1997 p 77

³ Kreyling Michael. *Inventing Southern Literature*. University Press of Mississippi. Jackson , 1998 , p111

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

memory by history- the Southerner was , as [Robert Penn] Warren observed , truly ‘ trapped in history’”¹

Furthermore , the canon of twentieth century writers from the South – William Faulkner, Eudora Welty , Richard Wright , Flannery O’Connor – still make their presence known in contemporary writing . The shadow of Faulkner , most particularly , looms large over any writer who dabbles with the gothic , with a “ postage-stamp-sized” locale , or with the psychodramas of the Southern family . Indeed , many writers are turning back to existing probes , narratives , and forms from the region , revitalizing them along the way .

It is especially difficult to be a “ Southern” writer , that is , a writer born and raised in the South , at home with its traditions and history . No wonder , William Faulkner was the voice of his region . One of the most exciting discoveries about Faulkner as a Southern writer is his significant use of the material of Southern life and history . Therefore it is quite important to note that Faulkner did not invent his material because it was there to be “mined” and “explored”.

Briefly , it is the destruction of the old Southern order , by war and military occupation and still more by finance capitalism that tempts and destroys it from within . “ Tell about the South,”² says Quentin Compson’s roommate at Harvard , who comes from Edmonton , Alberta, and is very curious about the unknown region beyond the Ohio. “ what’s it like there?” Shreve McCannon goes on to ask. “ what do they do there ? Why do they live there ? Why do they live at all?” and Quentin , whose background is a little like that of the author (Faulkner) - and who often seems to speak for him – Quentin answers , “You can’t understand it . You would have to be born there.” Nevertheless , he tells a long and violent story that he regards as the essence of the Deep South , which is not so much as a region as it is , in Quentin’s mind , an incomplete and frustrated nation trying to recover its own identity , trying to relive its legendary past .

¹ Lewis Simpson. P. The Fable of the Southern Writer . Louisiana State University Press. Baton rouge . 1994, p77

² William Faulkner . Absalom Absalom! .New American Library. New York. 1936. P142

2. The Southern Literary Tradition

Southern literature can be described as literature about the Southern part of the United States or as a body of written art by authors from this distinctive region. As important geographical location is for Southern literature, it is not merely the geography of the birthplace that matters. Southernness is an inner place and an outlook on life as much as it is home soil.

Characteristics of Southern literature encompass a recurring focus on the common history, sense of family, community, and the role of the individual within. Slavery, the Civil War, the Lost Cause, and the Reconstruction Era are common subjects and also constitute the Southern individual's identity. These subjects appear recurrently and very often mythologized and altered, having entered the collective memory as universally valid and applicable. In addition to this, the mixture of historical images with myths are often used in Southern literature to emphasize both the trial and hardship of the South and the universality of the matters addressed.

The look over the shoulder to the past has already begun with the Southern literature of the early nineteenth century, which was strongly influenced by classicist ideals of the old world. This literature always had an eye on Great Britain for both audience and models. An educated class of planters determined the taste. After this early period, the Southern historical novel came into view, introducing the typical cast of the Southern *belle* and her male equivalent, the Southern gentleman. The historical novel has strong romantic tendencies and is socially and politically very traditional. What needs to be said also is that the image of the South, even before the agony of the Civil War, as a distinctive region with a certain type of inhabitants a given code and a special role within the United States was beginning to evolve, in other terms, its construction had begun.

It was during the middle of the twentieth century that the rest of the American nation first noticed that something important was happening in the US South. A powerful and eloquent new voice was issuing from a seemingly improbable place – the rural agrarian Southland. In every literary genre, an emphatically Southern accent was making itself known, and today that accent is still being heard all over the world.

William Faulkner was the first and perhaps the greatest exponent of this new Southern literature, yet his voice was soon joined by a chorus of other Southerners like Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty and a host of others. This literary flowering and amazing proliferation which began in the 1920s is called the Southern literary Renaissance.

The Southern Renaissance, a period of blossoming for Southern literature that witnessed the birth and flowering of many Southern minds with recognition lasting to the present day. In point of fact, it is a term used to refer to the literature of the American South in the 1920s until the 1940s. In fact, it is generally said that the history of the Southern Renaissance had not yet been written, and its relationship to its leading figure William Faulkner has still not been fully explored. As a concept, the Southern literary Renaissance meant primarily to designate a remarkable surge of literature originating in the US South from the early 1920s to at least the mid 1940s and secondarily to identify some of its principal shared features.

It is called Southern Renaissance to indicate a height in productivity and popularity of the literature of the South. The choice of the name seems surprising and misleading in the sense that the term Renaissance implies a previous high time of Southern literature which did not exist. It is for this reason that Allen Tate argues to call the Southern Renaissance "Southern Naissance".

Accordingly, the Southern Renaissance explores some of the ways of writers, who either lived in, wrote about, or were otherwise associated with the American South between 1920s and 1940s and how they responded to the many changes during the period. Much of their writings feature the struggle between those who embraced social change and those who were more sceptical or challenged social change outright.

Moreover, the American South, during the first half of the Twentieth century, was still in a state of recovery from the aftermaths of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Industrialism and the notion of racial equality were seen as threats to Southern culture by many traditional Southerners. Thus, Southern Renaissance writers felt a strong need to represent and exemplify as well the tensions and paradoxes that resulted from the collision of Northern and Southern ideologies and the South's attempt to move forward while still looking backward.

The causes of the Southern literary Renaissance are equally controversial . some believe that it was part of the South's attempt to join the industrialized world , a sort of literary version of the economic and commercial “ New South ” movement . Others posit that it was a way of rising to the challenge of changes of Southern backwardness , like H.L Mencken's characterization of the South in 1917 as the “ Sahara of the Bozarts ” (Beaux Arts) . Still others agree that the Southern Renaissance was the South's reaction to the crumbling of traditions and standards in the wake of World War I .

Most , however , tend to agree with some version of Sir Walter Scott's thesis about the historical novel in his *General Preface to Waverley* or *Tis Sixty Years*.As his subtitle indicates , Scott believed that a period of sixty years , a span of about two generations, allowed enough distance in time to view past events with some degree of objectivity , but it allowed for direct transmission of insights and emotions from the elderly survivors of the period .

This thesis can be applied to the Southern Renaissance that its beginning was approximately sixty years after the Civil War and its authors could and did receive recollections from aged relations . As Richard King Lewis , Lewis P. Simpson , and others have argued , the Renaissance's major task was engaging , through memory and history , the South's painful past of defeat and racial guilt .

The influential critic Mencken had described the South as a cultural wasteland , *The Sahara of the Bozart* . Indeed with its guilt linked to slavery and segregation , the heavy defeat in the Civil War , the inertia and poverty , the shame and moral disintegration which followed with the Reconstruction , the South was often seen as characterized by backwardness. However , the very isolation of the South allowed it to keep its regional culture – one which was particularly rich because of its antebellum past .

As stated previously, Southern intellectuals sought to come to terms with their region in ways that would have shocked their forebears . In doing so , they revolutionized perceptions about Southern literature , culture , history and politics , bursts of innovative competitive and accomplished artists appeared in the segregated South after World War I to tell new stories .

And so , by the late 1920s , feeling that Southern culture , the agrarian values of rural America and the importance of family and faith were all under attack , a notable defense of Southern culture was offered by twelve authors who responded strongly by contributing articles to *I Will Take My Stand* . This book made up of essays , is a classic work on localized politics , heritage and culture and the importance of the traditional agrarian community . A sense of geography and history , an attachment to the Southern vital moral values and a respect for older codes and truths – what William Faulkner called the “ old verities ” – tie the writings of these Southern writers .

In this social manifesto , the authors - the so-called Agrarians , a group closely linked to the Fugitives – decried the encroachment of Northern industrialism , which they believed was threatening to destroy the remnants of agrarian culture that were worth preserving . The Agrarians maintained that the Southern farmer's connection to his land and kin was superior to the Northern industrialism's commitment to capitalism at the expense of humanity . The values of agrarian culture in the South became a defining aspect of Southern Renaissance writer's works . While the virtues of the South did not pass unnoted , many if not most , Southern writers characterized their region in terms of failure and marginalization , contrasting it with , and maintaining its distinctiveness from , other regions of the country .

It has been said that significant literary movements are most likely to develop in times of tension . As seen previously , tension is crucial to establish explanations of the Southern Renaissance's origins – tension between an agrarian past and a growing industrialization , tension resulting from the Southerner's disastrous experience of World War I and decreasing isolation . The region's artists would express that tension through their writing often by holding to the past while simultaneously questioning inherited values .

Indeed Southern writers know what defeat , poverty and guilt are. They characteristically respect history and tradition , cherish individualism and distrust industrialism . Above all , they share a passionate , if critical , attachment to the South – its history , culture and people - , or as Alexander Blackburn more poetically puts it , all Southern writers are inescapably marked by a “ marrow-deep experience of land and blood ” .

Correspondingly , a few critics caught a glimmering of the Southern movement's significance quite early , but only a glimmering . In 1927 , Herschel Brickell believed that it was no “ exaggeration to speak of a Renaissance of literature in the South ” and in 1930 Howard Mumford Jones agreed , though he predicted that it would “ remain merely charming and interesting ” . As late as 1942 Alfred Kazin , while acknowledging Faulkner's experimental , could pronounce him “ curiously dull , furiously commonplace , and often meaningless , suggesting some exasperated sullenness of mind ” . The French , on the other hand , were quicker to acclaim the eminence of Southern Renaissance achievement and by 1954 the London Times Literary Supplement could say without challenge that “ the literature of the South ... has solidly established itself as the most important , the most talented , interesting and valuable in the United States .

In the Southern literary Renaissance , Richard H. King examines some of the leading participants in this effort , assesses their achievements and their failures , and attempts to account for their motivations . According to literary critic Richard H. King , “ the writers and intellectuals of the South after the late 1920s were engaged in an attempt to come to terms not only with the inherited values of Southern tradition but also with a certain way of perceiving and dealing with the past , what Nietzsche called “ monumental ” historical consciousness . In the work of William Faulkner , John Crow Ransome , Zora Neale Hurston , Katherine Anne Porter , the diverse wealth of voices in the early twentieth century South comes alive .

Is the Southern Renaissance over ? This question is addressed briefly by the influential Richard King , and at length by the colorful Alexander Blackburn . while both of them agree that the Southern Renaissance continues into the present , although in a new and altered form . King's view is somewhat less sanguine than Blackburn's . King's vision might be summed up this way : Although others have risen to take his place , we will not see Faulkner's like again .

According to King , the growth age of the Renaissance ended with the publication of Faulkner's most acknowledged masterpiece “ *Go Down Moses* ” (1942) , since that time, the tradition which had engaged the imagination of Southern authors is not the memory of the agony of slavery , nor the ordeal of the Civil War , yet , to quote Lewis Simpson , “ the memory of a memory ” . In other words , contemporary Southern authors are inspired not by

Sutpen or Sartoris , but by William Faulkner himself . On this point , Blackburn differs , the latter sees change .

According to Blackburn , the Southern literary tradition is still vigorous as writers like Eudora Welty , William Styron , Elizabeth Spencer and a host of others attest . Blackburn argues that such authors have not been fascinated or cowed by Faulkner's stature . The modern Southern author , Blackburn contends , is confronted by the same inheritance of guilt and loss that inspired his predecessors , yet he makes of this confrontation a new and different fiction – as great writers have always done - . Therefore , the Southern Renaissance is not dead , it may, in fact be only just beginning .

In *The Mind of the South* (1941) , an analysis of Southern temperament and culture, W .J . Cash observes the remarkable influence of Southern literature since the beginning of the Reconstruction era . Specifically , he traces the development not simply of writing designed to propagandize the Old South destroyed in the Civil War , but also a Southern literature used “ more or less purely for itself ”. By 1900 , Cash notes , Southern writers had begun to produce literature for its own sake , and by 1939 “ the South had actually produced more books of measurable importance than any other section of the country . ”

In addition to this , W. J Cash claimed that Faulkner , of course , was fortunately for literature , a surviving one . Indeed , his career epitomizes all definitions and groups of the Southern Renaissance . His major works appeared in the decades between the Civil War and he incorporated local memories of Oxford , Mississippi , in his fictions about the war , such as *Absalom Absalom !* and *The Unvanquished* .

Unlike many authors of the Southern Renaissance , William Faulkner incorporates contradictory stands toward the past and the modern world . Among his representatives of the New South are the vulgarly greedy and commercially astute Snopeses , but they are more unattractive than the fallen , self-indulgent aristocrats who are their fails , such as the Sartoris and Compson families . Faulkner may have bemoaned the past- world War I decline in moral standards through a character like the dissolute Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* (1931) and *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) , yet her prewar predecessors , like the original Bayard Sartoris of Sartoris (1929) and Thomas Sutpen of *Absalom Absalom !* (1936) are no greater models of

virtue . As for so many categories into which one may try to fit Faulkner, he exemplifies the Southern Renaissance , contradicts it and ultimately transcends it .

Within the context of the Southern Renaissance , writers like Allen Tate , Katherine Anne Porter and Zora Neale Hurston emerged to write about the South , both its mythical past and its often harsh contemporary realities , including deeply entrenched racism and the hardships of lives lived under crushing poverty .

Similarly , William Faulkner is certainly the flagship of the Southern Renaissance , during which Southern literature received much critical attention . Its literary subjects witnessed a serious shift from unquestioned glorification of the old ways and the planter tradition to dealing with the defeat , guilt . In fact , Faulkner's writings are not dead , yet they are still perpetuated by contemporary authors . Literary magazines like the “ Oxford American ” are still riding the crest of the wave created by the (Southern) Renaissance .

Thematically , the Southern Renaissance is deeply rooted in the literary tradition of the South : its past , the defeat , and common guilt are on the plate . Before the Southern Renaissance , Southern literature mostly glorified the antebellum period and the plantation tradition . More importantly , the Northern audience was merely interested in historic novels with beautiful and morally strong Southern *belles* and virtuous Southern gentlemen glorifying the old Southern way of life . During the Renaissance this has made room for a guilt-ridden , utilizing nature , culture and mainly history as tools to perpetuate the longing for a long lost past order .

Although the literature of the antebellum South is not widely acknowledged as the literature of the period following the Civil War ; there are many powerful indications that elucidate the fact that the literature of the Southern Renaissance draws from the pre war-period thematically and figuratively . Indeed , war , defeat , guilt , and racial conflicts are dominant themes of the Southern literature of this post-war period , and this presentation is in an obvious tradition of Southern literature presenting and describing history and constantly reflecting upon it . There are several indications that building a communal spirit and the sense of belonging and social distance from other regions began in the Southern states as early as the beginning 18th century . References to the past on all levels : thematically , symbolically , and literary are omnipresent .

On the whole , critics and writers of the Southern literary Renaissance were notable for their contribution to literary criticism , especially the New Criticism , which became the leading approach to the teaching of literature in the US in the 1950s and 1960s . Finally , it is quite important to note that However , this literary movement continues in the culturally deep tracks of Faulkner and Eudora Welty to represent the South as the most distinctive , productive and accomplished literary area of the United States.

3.The Root of All Evil

3.1.The Long Shadow of Horror in the US South : Slavery

Unlike any given region in the United States , the American South had undertaken a tragic experience . Indeed , there are several key factors and dishonourable events that played an outsized role in its history, starting with the evil practice of slavery as a reliable means for the new nation to advance economically at the expense of thousands of innocent people , moving on to the bloodiest Civil War that resulted from a fundamentally divergent way of life. Consequently, such crucial events left heavy traces on the psyche of the South.

The South in which William Faulkner had lived and grown up was quite conservative. It was based on some unshakeable moral conducts and values that aroused a large sense of immobility . Apart from its social order , the Southern tragedy did not emerge with the ordeal of Reconstruction nor with the agony of the Civil War , but rather with the growth of a peculiar institution . In short , the South had acquired its financial prosperity and power thanks to the institution of slavery whose spiritual stresses became an inescapable part of life in the Old South .

An essential reality about the South's peculiar institution is that its slaves were blacks whose presence in this specific region was of great significance . Blacks were unwillingly brought to the American South for the labour that the Europeans themselves could not perform . In fact , the South's land would have remained wild without the productive

power of the Africans who had perfectly adapted to the land's needs , the cotton plantations did serve outstandingly as the most appropriate means for the welfare of the landowners , yet they were so deeply involved with the prosperity of their plantations that they started to fall into dispute because of their ill-treatment of the slaves .

Hundreds of thousands of slaves were exploited , tortured and even sexually abused. More than that , they had no right to react as legal human beings since their rights were threatened . David Minter¹ describes the dishonourable background of the South as follows :

Beneath the nation's official history lay thousands of brutal stories – of people captured and enslaved : of people robbed of their land and herded on to reservations if pioneers whose back breaking labors had done little more than scar the plains : of women ignored, belittled , dominated , and abused ; of working masses huddled in ghettos ; of gaunt tenant farmers and labourers.²

As time passed , slavery as an inevitable evil became an economic necessity. First, it was seen as an economic institution solely established for the purpose of solving an economic problem , yet that problem-work cost too much money and so the landowners implemented forced labor for economic gain . Thus , slavery provided the basis for a specific Southern economy and social life which had continued on until the Civil War.

Many critics rightly point to the way that slavery acquires a central significance in Faulkner's fiction as the original “ sin ” or “ crime ” which must be expiated by contemporary white Southerners , the sin which is the source of the South's woes , its “ curse ” or “ doom ”.³

In light of this statement , the memory of slavery Faulkner found lingered in the South as an ancestral curse , a sort of regional original sin . The legacy of this *institution* remained as racial segregation and as an atmosphere of violence . In fact , slavery pervades

¹ David Minter is one the controversial literary critics . He investigated widely in the writings of William Faulkner and he provided the readers with a salient and vital body of criticism .

² David Minter . William Faulkner : His Life and Work.1997 p 204-205

³ Erik Dussere . The Debts of History , Southern Honor , Affirmative Action , And Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust. 2001.p40

much of Faulkner's literary creations . Moreover , Mississippi , as a deep South cotton state , had been strongly committed to slavery as its chief source of plantation labor . Over 40 percent of the population in 1860 were black slaves and close to half of all white families did own slaves . More than just a system of labor , slavery shaped nearly every aspect of social organization, politics , culture in the world William Faulkner wrote about .

There are jumbled array of several fundamental and remarkable literary productions that provide readers with a close look at a system and culture of American slavery , more specifically in Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom !* (1936) , *The Unvanquished* (1938) and mainly the seven interrelated short stories collected in *Go Down Moses* (1942) . They are regarded as powerful representations of the role of slavery as being the divine force of the Southern economy .

In the novel *Absalom Absalom !* , Faulkner examines the injustices of slavery first through the story of the novel's central character Thomas Sutpen , chronicling Sutpen's rise from his poverty and disgraceful childhood to being owner of twenty slaves and 100 acre plantation in Mississippi the epicenter of the antebellum slave-owning aristocracy . Sutpen as a mirror image of the South's outrageous peculiar institution and a vivid portrayal of its moral evil is generally condemned by critics for his inhuman treatment of others , most remarkably women , whom he regards like breeding animals in his quest to produce a male heir .

What is noticeable as well is that slavery intended to reduce humans to the level of beasts , livestock or even properties that can be bought , sold and treated as the owner pleases. The exploitation of humans is well developed in nearly every description of Sutpen's slaves . His land of twenty slaves is described as ' wild niggers ' or ' a herd of wild beasts ' who lay huddled under his wagon cover .¹ Slavery with a main emphasis on dehumanization and objectification of a human being was for Faulkner , a curse which affected not only the land but the people . Thus , it became one of the dominant motives in much of his fiction .

In *Go Down Moses* , the land inherited by Issac McCaslin has borne the sin of the institution of slavery . Faulkner painted vividly the land's cycle whereby it is passed from one generation to another , and each generation in its brokenness makes the same mistakes upon the same land over and over again . In this novel , not only the male descendent but the only and the last descendent in the male line and in the third generation repudiates the inherited

¹ Hughes Richard . *Absalom Absalom !!* . Vintage Books . London . 1993

land and money because he feels that this whole land , the whole South is cursed . the curse came into being every since MsCaslin had sexually abused his own mulatto daughter as it was seen as his poverty . Consequently , she was dismissed because she was of an inferior race .

Correspondingly , Faulkner's 1942 collection of short stories *Go Down Moses* was published when racial segregation and white supremacy were perceived as ingrained patterns of Southern thought . He experienced the Southern racial conflict very intensely , but he could, especially in the fiction of his major phase , distance himself from society and dramatize its racial contradictions .

Additionally , the inescapable part of white South's guilt lies also in the legalized sexual abuse of black women during the antebellum days . The Old South , having based its entire economic and social structure on the institution of slavery , lived by double standards and used to illegalize miscegenation . On the one hand , miscegenation was perceived to be the most rigid sexual taboo since the rumour of only one drop of black blood could ruin Southerners ' social status . On the other hand , it was used as an apology for legal unpunishable sexual abuse and exploitation of black women that the planters assumed to have right on . *The Bear*¹ (1942) perhaps offers Faulkner's most explicit statement about the injustices of slavery , *Absalom Absalom !* is said to be his most extended representation of sexual exploitation . Certainly , Faulkner was deeply troubled and strongly affected by sexual abuse of black women .

Again Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom !* gives a vivid insight into this situation: Thomas Sutpen having learned in his earliest youth all about the value system on which the white South based its status and power , abandoned his first wife , a daughter of a rich Haitian planter and his son because she was partly black . Sutpen made this decision because his first wife could ruin his plan or mainly his design to infiltrate the Southern upper class society . For the same reason and for the fear of miscegenation , Henry the fruit of Sutpen's second marriage killed his half brother " Charles" . Because the latter was not a brother for him , yet he was seen as ' the nigger that's going to sleep with his sister ' unless he stopped him .

Following the same pattern of behaviour , Henry's sister Judith took care of the son of her mulatto half-brother and his octoroon lover ; however , she never accepted him as a

¹ The Bear is Faulkner's fifth short story included in his 1942 collection of short stories " Go Down Moses "

family member . The relationship is best illustrated in the following lines that cast light on the sleeping arrangement in Judith's room .

Charles Etienne was sleeping in the trundle bed beside Judith's , beside that of the woman who looked upon him and treated him with a cold unbending detached gentleness more discouraging than the fierce ruthless constant guardianship of the negroes , who with sort of invincible spurious humility slept on a pallet on the floor .¹

These distinctions were also present in the way Charles Etienne addressed her . Judith allowed Charles Etienne to call her aunt " call me Aunt Judith , Charles " ² because she was driven by a noblesse oblige principle , a way of behaviour that was common for the plantation aristocracy of the antebellum South . This principle obliged her to behave with blacks , among whom was also her mulatto nephew , as parents would behave to their children patronizingly paternalistic.

With *Absalom Absalom !* and *Go Down Moses* , Faulkner exposes a tragic reality of people who achieved their dream only by making it impossible for many others . Henceforth , it is only through slave labor that a person could reach the highest level of wealth and aristocracy in America . Through Sutpen , Faulkner paints a picture of what a Southern plantation owner is about , how he treats those below him , and the essential truths that are an integral part of that legacy . And insofar as that is true , Faulkner uses Sutpen to expose the flaws of a South he admired . And in *Go Down Moses* , he portrays the conditions of slaves who were very much viewed as property , their value is judged only in economic terms .

The genuine images that Faulkner explores in these two novels and in many others are complex and complicated , yet they are so useful in revealing some of the social trauma involved in viewing people as property to be used as labor force or a means by which they could fulfill some evil needs . Faulkner's project becomes once involving not only the

¹ Hughes Richard . *Absalom Absalom !* . Vintage Books . London , 1993 , p 197

² *Ibid* , 208

characters or the settings in his novels , but also the culture and economy of the entire American South .

As shown formerly , there was no question that slavery formed the backbone of the South's economy . Thus , it played a critical role in the development of early America . It was a reliable means for the new nation to advance economically at the expense of thousands of innocent people . It is quite evident that slavery was a wrong and evil fact , yet it was allowed to continue since it was heavily grounded in the belief that without slavery blacks would remain savages and without religion .

In looking at the history of slavery in the American nation , Ronald Takaki's in influential work *A Different Mirror : A History of Multicultural America* provides an account of the United States through the views and the history of the non-Caucasian people . Takaki believes that by “ allowing (us) to see events from the viewpoints of different groups , a multicultural curriculum enables us to reach toward a more comprehensive understanding of American history”¹ In his introduction chapter “ *A Different Mirror* ” Takaki introduces his outlook of slavery and racism as it pertains to the history of the United States as follows :

African American have been the central minority throughout our country's history. They were initially brought here in a slave ship in 1619. Actually , these first twenty Africans might not have been slaves ; rather , like most white labourers , they were probably indentured servants . The transformation of Africans into slaves is the story of the “hidden” origins of slavery. How and when was it decided to institute a system of bonded black labour? What happened , while freighted with racial significance , was actually conditioned by class conflicts within white society . Once established , the “peculiar institution” would have consequences for centuries to come . During the nineteenth century , the political storm over slavery almost destroyed the nation . Since the Civil War and emancipation , race has continued to be largely defined in relation to African Americans-segregation , civil rights , the underclass , and affirmative action .²

¹ Takaki Ronald . *A Different Mirror : A History of Multicultural America*. Little Brown Company. New York . 1993 , p 04

² *Ibid* , 07

Takaki explores the historical progression that African Americans faced during slavery, after emancipation, and during segregation, and uses first-hand accounts to elucidate the harsh realities of America's dark history. He notes the beginning of this racist ideology when "in 1661, the Virginia Assembly began to institutionalize slavery"¹ As noted previously, slavery came into existence in the form of indentured servants, many of whom were Caucasian, and in need of money to travel and or, to pay off debt² Soon after the introduction of African American slaves came the notion that unlike the white indentured servants who would eventually be freed, African Americans were viewed as "heathens" and their assumed lack of civilization allowed white owners to see them as property that could be willed and passed down for generations.³ Hence, as Takaki notes, Americans began to "prefer black slaves over white indentured servants."⁴This shift is what transformed the course of history for the standard on treatment of blacks.

On the whole, it is significant that Southerners did not create the Slave system all at once, rather they built it little by little, step by step, choice by choice, over a period of many years. Therefore, most of them were more or less blind to the ultimate consequences of the terrible choices they were making. And so, it is worthy of note to state that Southerners became nothing but the victims of their own peculiar institution. By documenting and painting some of the strongest images of the agony of slavery, Faulkner invites the readers to analyze how the truth of history should be dealt with and shows that the present is still deeply rooted within the injustices of the past.

3.2. The Civil War Era and the Advent of the Lost Cause

Defined by both cultural vibrancy and widespread poverty, and marked by a long and complex history of trade, migration, cultural exchange, and slavery, the literature of the US South is born of the intricacies of a complex and tragic history. The nineteenth century was a particularly tumultuous period, as the region experienced the rise and fall of

¹ Ibid, 58

² Ibid, 58

³ Ibid, 59

⁴ Ibid, 65

chattel slavery through a military loss in 1865 that left its wake a devastated country , a decimated generation , widespread poverty and physical destruction , the ruin of an agricultural economy that once offered the promise of cotton as “king” , and a legacy of explosive racial rage that would continue throughout the twentieth century .

Prior to the Southern Slavery and its harmful effects not only on the South but the nation as a whole , the Civil War (1861-1865) was also viewed as America's most profound and vexatious social problem because it split the nation into two different blocks . The conflict between the North and the South resulted from fundamentally different ways of life. In fact , the war's impact on the nation or the South much more precisely was mainly terrible and disastrous , for it offered no easy solution .

One of the very starting problematic situations of the Old South was the system of slavery , yet a serious conflict came into existence because of the different economic policies and strategies of the North and the South . Under industrialism's influence , the North demanded the abolition of the Slavery system ; however , the use of slaves in Southern agriculture was essential , vital and of great significance .

And so , by the middle of the nineteenth century , slavery became the central issue in a national political debate that led to a bloody civil war that marked one of the most permanent changes in American history , transforming the country economically , politically and socially. While the war increased Northern prosperity , the South's entire society collapsed completely . The Southerners who chose deliberately to develop and preserve slavery could no more escape responsibility for their action than they could escape its heavy consequences .

Indeed , slavery caused the shift between the North and the South in Post Civil America . Samuel Watkins , a confederate soldier from the Civil War summarized the division between the North and South accurately when he stated : “ The South is our country, the North is the country of those who live there . We are an agricultural people , they are a manufacturing people .”¹ It is truly hard to believe that during the Civil War , Southerners expressed a great deal about their strong commitment to Slavery . As the historian C.Vann

¹ Samuel Watkins. A Classic Memoir of the Civil War. Penguin Random House . UK. 1993 , p 06

Woodward suggested “ the end of slavery in the South can be described as the death of a society , though elsewhere it could more easily be characterized as the liquidation of an investment.”¹

What is remarkable is that the loss of the Civil War during the Nineteenth century had a profound impact on the psyche of the South . The region not only lost the war , but its whole way of life as well . The aristocratic structure of slavery was destroyed when the South was defeated . The whites were still in control of the economic and social structure of the region , the blacks who were no longer slaves , were mostly under the domination of the white society.

Separate but equal laws became a solid part of the South and continued the tradition of racism in equality. The following quote highlighted in Takaki's *A Different Mirror* , comes from a man who lived during the time of segregation and Jim Crow laws provides a glimpse of the pervasive ideology in the US South :

They're Jim Crowin'us down here too much ; there's no chance for a coloured man who has any self-respect' The exodus ...of coloured people from the sunny South to the colder states of the North ... has its very birth out of the 'Jim Crow' and ' Segregation' condition which now exists in the cities of the South and which have crowded coloured people into narrow unsanitary or unhealthy quarters ... segregating them like cattle , hogs or sheep.²

The above portrayal illuminates how these laws bring about separate , but nothing close to equal . More than this , racial violence continued to be inflicted upon blacks and was far worse than the imposed Jim Crow laws. This historical outlook of how American society was raised to view blacks and race trickled down through various generations and by the time that William Faulkner was born in 1897 , much of this black stigma continued and remained.

What evolved over the next hundred years in the South was a society where blacks were legally free , but socially disenfranchised from an equal education and equal economic

¹ Kolchin Peter. American Slavery. Penguin Books Ltd. England , 1993 , p 54

² Takaki , op cit , p 345

opportunities . In fact , the relationship between the two members of the South (whites and blacks) is powerfully exemplified in Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* which explores that social and economic divide . The black characters in this story are demonstrated as servants of the Compson family . Their role as servants is expanded by Faulkner to that of spiritual caretaker . Dilsey , can be regarded as a vital and strong reference that reinforces this reality .

Agriculture as being the mainstay of the Southern economy was less profitable since industrial and manufacturing business dominated the American economy . The Southern economic problems and ordeals can be widely seen in the way Faulkner portrays the Compsons . Their economic decline spans several generations , each one experiencing a greater collapse . By 1910 , Mr. Compson is forced to sell the last of the family's land to pay for Caddy's wedding and Quentin's education at Harvard University .

“ Literature has always been entwined with popular history and much of the literature written about the Civil War served to perpetuate popular sentiments , such as the plantation myth, complete with its cavalier planters and slaves faithful to the old masses.”¹ Faulkner's writings , however , so often worked to undermine this popular mythology . That war has provided one of the most enduring and popular subjects for literature in American history , more than 1000 novels with Civil War themes or scenes , for example , were written by Southerners alone² And more than 200 volumes of poetry about the Civil War were written during the 1860's.³

Undoubtedly , the vast majority of that material has not been remembered as great literature . That forgotten literature played a great part , though , in fighting and refighting Americas greatest conflict by contributing to and giving direction to the public dialogue . The earliest Civil War novels , for instance , were intensely partisan and intended to show how grievously the other side has erred . This body of popular literature also offers a tremendous opportunity for scholars and students to recapitulate the past and to pinpoint the world view

¹ Schuster Richard . American Civil War Novels to 1880. Columbia University Press.1960 , p 45

² Malden David and Peggy Bach , eds. Classics of Civil War Fiction. Jackson University Press of Mississippi.1991 , p 101

³ Steinmetz Lee. The Poetry of the American Civil War. Michigan University Press, 1960 , p 200

and social milieu from which their literature sprang . Whether it accurately reflects history or not , it does reflect what the people or a substantial portion of them believed about what was happening

For William Faulkner , the Civil War was the major crisis in the history of the Yoknapatawpha County¹ as it was in the nation's history . The war was the central theme of *Sartoris* , his first yoknapatawpha novel and it was a subject that continued to engage him as a writer . *Light in August* (1932) , *Absalom Absalom !* , *The Unvanquished* and *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) all dealt with the Civil War , not with the military events of the war itself , but with the war as the disaster that determined what followed . Like Quentin Compson , many of the people of Faulkner's county are 'a barrack filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts' who know that history has dealt them a painful and humiliating defeat .

In a nation that otherwise celebrates its prosperity and success , the postwar South became scarred by poverty and defeat . Douglas Miller , writing on Faulkner and the Civil War in 1963 , observed : “ In the broadest sense most of Faulkner's fiction is concerned with the defeat of the South or the effects of that defeat.² There is little evidence that Faulkner ever did much historical research on the Civil War , but coming of age in Mississippi in early twentieth century , it would be difficult not to absorb the ever-present legacy of the Civil War, as a boy and well into his adult life , Faulkner surrounded himself with people who were obsessed with and often quite knowledgeable about the Civil War , particularly the war as it affected not only northern Mississippi but the South as a whole .

In a like manner , historians are usually distrustful of fictional accounts of the past . They expend a good deal of energy trying to undo the influence of novels , movies and other popular influences on the historical consciousness of the American public . However , Faulkner's vision of the past is quite different , Because he is a remarkably astute historian , not as a factually accurate researcher , but as an intuitive interpreter of his people and their past .

In his treatment of the Civil War , particularly as depicted in *The Unvanquished* , Faulkner was decades ahead of the historians , with few exceptions , the main focus of

¹ Ibid , p2

² Douglas T. Miller . *Faulkner and the Civil War : Myth and Reality* by the *American Quarterly* , , Vol 15 , No 2 , Part 1 (Summer 1963) , pp .200-209 published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

historians working on the Civil War , as a lost cause , was the military leadership and political strategies . One of the novel's underlying themes had to do with whether the war was avoidable , implicit in this question was the notion that it was a war that might not have been necessary to fight , for it was the product of ideological fanaticism and political failure .

Correspondingly , The Civil War figures significantly in Faulkner's fictional world of Yoknapatawpha County . While only *The Unvanquished* and several short stories deal exclusively with the wartime period , this era plays a prominent part in a number of his novels, notably *Sartoris* (1929) , *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom Absalom !* . In the broadest sense most of Faulkner's fiction is much concerned with the defeat of the South or the effects of that defeat . Rarely does one find a Faulknerian character who is not conscious of the Civil War .

Furthermore , the war stands at the center of Faulkner's chronology . Time moves quite freely toward the war from the ante-bellum period or back to it from the latter nineteenth and twentieth centuries . This centrality is demonstrated in “ The Jail ” section of *Requiem For a Nun* (1951) where a girl's name and the date April 16th , 1861 , scratched on the jailhouse window four days after Sumter , becomes the symbolic pivot point of the story.”¹ Fredrick J. Hoffman in a recent book on Faulkner has commented on the novelist's use of the war as a focal point . Hoffman terms it the “ Major Event ” in Faulkner's time pattern.”² However , no critical study has been made of the over-all importance of the Civil War in the author's writing.”³

Surely a climactic event like the Civil War , which had both significant cause and basic effects , is bound to influence the literature of the region which suffered defeat in it . Robert Penn Warren , writing at the beginning of the centennial observances of 1861-65 speaks of the Civil War as “ our only ‘felt’ history – history lived in the national imagination ...It is an overwhelming image of human , and national experience”⁴ He goes on , by way of differentiating the Southern from the Northern reaction , to say that “ In defeat the

¹ William Faulkner . *Requiem for a Nun*. Vintage books . New York. P 229-39

² Hoffman Fredrick J. *The Art of Southern fiction* . Southern Illinois University Press.USA.1968 ,p 24-25

³ Several studies of Faulkner's broad view of the South which have some material on the Civil War include : Warren Beck “Faulkner and the South” , Malcolm Cowley “ William Faulkner's Legend of the South” , Granville Hicks “ Faulkner's South : A Northern Interpretation” , Irving Howe “ The Southern Myth and William Faulkner” , William Van O'Connor : “ Faulkner's Legend of the Old South”.

⁴ *The legacy of the Civil War : Meditations on the Centennial* . Random House . New York , 1961 , p04

solid South was born – not only the witless automation of fidelity to the Democratic Party but the mystique of prideful ‘ difference ‘ , identity , and defensiveness.”¹

Much of Faulkner's descriptive detail is far from mythical , having a valid base in historical reality . Northern troops ripped up most Mississippi railways . The normal procedure was to heat the rails in the middle and twist them out of shape around trees . In *The Unvanquished* this practice becomes part of humorous incident when young Bayard Sartoris , Negro Companion Ringo sees his first railroad after the Yankees had demolished it. He exclaims “... You mean hit have to come in here and run up down around these trees like a squirrel ? ...”² Other common occurrences during the war which Faulkner incorporates into his fiction include the legions of aimless Negroes wandering about the countryside or following the Union troops , expecting the millennium at any moment , the gangs of lawless men who lived by plunder and the widespread destruction of property and the scarcity of food that undermined much of the South's vitality and purpose.

William Faulkner's powerful descriptions of the agony of the Civil War , Southern front-line and Southern home- front are not exaggerated . They are response to not only Southern military heavy defeat but mainly to the destruction of principles that formed the backbone of Southern society . The war caused the inability of labour market , cut off financial and food resources and destroyed economy and traffic system as well . Faulkner reflects this situation in images of his South : Jefferson was thus burnt down during the war , the majority of cope with the lack of money , food and labour , with uncultivated and impoverished land .

Several Civil War incidents are drawn directly from the history of Oxford , Mississippi , Faulkner's model for his fictional Jefferson . No major battles were fought in or near Oxford although several fights took place in the neighbourhood , this is also true in William Faulkner's Jefferson . In 1864 , Northern troops under General Andrew J . Smith burned Oxford , lebellng all but the main business buildings . Similarly , Jefferson was burned by Smith's soldiers in the latter part of 1864 ; Faulkner treats this fire rather matter-of-factly , though in *Requiem For a Nun* he has all the buildings burn except the jail , which becomes a symbol of the South's punishment and suffering. Equally a striking evidence of

¹ Ibid , 05

² William Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* . Vintage Books. New York . 1959 , p 73

Faulkner's utilization of historical fact is the fictional career of Colonel John Sartoris , which so closely parallels the career of the writer's own great-grandfather , Colonel Falkner¹

The physical suffering and material loss caused by the war in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County was great . Not only did Jefferson burn , but a number of the surrounding plantations were similarly destroyed , including the Sartoris mansion . Other planters such as Sutpen found that the four years of war and neglect had impoverished the land and demolished much property , including slaves .

Even Sutpen's superhuman efforts could not restore the prewar prosperity on his plantation . General Compson , on the other hand , was forced to mortgage his square mile to a New England carpetbagger in 1866 . Other families suffered similar losses and by the end of hostilities the old economic and social order had collapsed . This decay that Faulkner depicts faithfully is not over exaggerated . Indeed , the South after four years of warfare within its own borders , was not only defeated , its whole pattern of social organization lay in ruins . The fighting and foraging of armies had wrought great desolation : the freeing of the slaves had upset the South's labor system , food and money were both scarce since crops had not been planted , markets had been closed and transportation systems had been ruined too .

However , it is of essence to note that William Faulkner's chief concern is not with the physical destruction caused by the war . He treats the burning , pillaging and general devastation in a proper and unemotional manner , even to the point of underplaying this aspect of the struggle. What does occupy the author's attention is the less concrete but equally important moral transformation which resulted from four years of violent fighting and strong defeat . In the Appendix which William Faulkner wrote for the Viking Portable , he states that: “ After the old town had been burned by the Federal General Smith ... the new little town (emerged) , in time to be populated mainly by the descendants not of Compsons but of Snopeses . ”²

In the writer's canon , the Southern struggle from 1861 to 1865 is the major turning point , forming a watershed between the old South of the planter aristocrats – the Sartorises , Sutpens and Compsons and the post-bellum South dominated by the Snopeses . Faulkner

¹ A good account of William C Falkner is found in Robert Cantwell “ The Faulkner Recollections of a Gifted Family ” , in William Faulkner : Three Decades of Criticism , Fredrick J.Hoffman and Olga Vickery.

² Malcolm Cowley . The Portable Faulkner . Penguin Books USA Inc . New York , 1977 , p 741

contributed to the creation of Southern Civil War history in one more way . He actually presented it not only from men soldiers ' perspective but also from a perspective of women , children and slaves who were left behind , at home . Once more , Faulkner's 1942 novel *Absalom Absalom !* paints artfully the Civil War period from a home-front view point as follows :

Judith Sutpen joined the other women – they were wounded in Jefferson then – in the impoverished hospital where (...) they cleaned and dressed the self-fouled bodies of strange injured and dead and made lint of the window curtains and sheets and linen of the houses in which they had been born ; there were none to ask about her brother and sweetheart , while they talked among themselves of sons and brothers and sisters and husbands with tears and grief.¹

Judith's aunt Rosa Coldfield contributed to the war in a different manner , she wrote: “ the odes to Southern soldiers (...) a thousand or more”² whereas Judith's grandfather Goodhue Coldfield protested against the war , “ he mounted to the attic with his hammer and his handful of nails and nailed the door behind him and threw the hammer out of the window”³

With the war and defeat , a new South came into being , owing to rapid change (urbanization and industrialization) , inspired by the assumption that history should be forgotten and much attention should be paid to economic development than politics. Moreover , it was dominated by the amoral or naturalistic forces of modernism , typified by the Northern carpetbaggers and the Southern scalawags as shown in the Snopes clan which gradually infiltrates postwar Jefferson . Significantly , the first successful Snopes to enter the Faulknerian world “ Ab ”, gets his start as a thieving horse trader during the Civil War .

Since Faulkner regarded the Civil War to have been a mistake or an ineffectual tragedy and it is no wonder that the war had solved nothing because it had not freed the lacks fully . Such freedom would come only when enlightened Southerners - like the second and

¹ Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom !* , p 125-126

² Ibid , 83

³ Ibid , 82

third generation McCaslins – perceived the moral sin ; meanwhile blacks would survive , as Gavin Stevens explains to his nephew Chick Mallison :

I'm defending Sambo from . . . the outlanders who will fling him decades back not merely into injustice but into grief and agony and violence too by forcing on us laws based on the idea that man's injustice to man can be abolished overnight by police . Sambo will suffer it of course : there are not enough of him yet to do anything else . And he will endure it , absorb it and survive because he is Sambo and has that capacity . . . he will even beats us there because he has the capacity to endure and survive...We the South must expiate and abolish it ourselves alone and without help .¹

In addition to this , The Civil War was followed by the era of Reconstruction . The American South , as the loser in the war , was facing heavy economic and political breakdown . As stated previously, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha went through the same tragic experience . The war left traces on Thomas Sutpen's and General Compson's plantations .The former did not manage to rebuild his plantation and was forced to open a shop to survive . He used to spend many afternoons there “ curs(ing) the store empty of customers.”² who were as impoverished as the land during and after the war . After Sutpen's death , Judith , his daughter, “ ran the store herself until she found a buyer for it ”³. The latter put the first mortgage on the still intact square mile to a New England carpet-bagger in “66”⁴

On a national level , Reconstruction was marked by redemption and forgiveness ; however , on a regional level , Reconstruction meant the beginning for a fierce campaign for white supremacy and almost a long period of segregation and racial violence .Moreover , in Faulkner's literary creations , Reconstruction is somehow the most problematic period . There are not so many characters and events depicting it . Accordingly , it is significant that it remained the one period in Southern history he avoided and seemed unable or unwilling to foreshadow .

In Doyle's words , “ it was more than just the creative problems of plot or character , it was the subject , the history , and all that it meant for what the South was that made

¹ William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*. New American Library .New York . 1948 , p 155

² Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom* , p 183

³ Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom* , p 186

⁴ Ibid , 708

Reconstruction so difficult – especially for the probing and sometimes heretical mind of William Faulkner to reassess.”¹ Since Faulkner is mostly concerned with moral problems, he often simplifies historical events or uses them symbolically. Thus, he over emphasizes the moral change brought on by the Civil War and its aftermath.

There is no question that the Civil War, and defeat in it, had a serious effect upon the South; it was like a sledgehammer blow that pushes a post that much further into the ground, and guarantees that it will stay firmly implanted that much longer. It is of essence to note that, Faulkner in spite of his wide knowledge and use of Southern history is not a historical novelist in the strict sense, any more than are, other great writers who have in the past utilized historical material for literary purposes.

In the final analysis, it can be argued that Faulkner as a Southerner of his particular generation, had a double trouble. Belonging to a region which was heavily marked by its past, having experienced the abrupt breaks with tradition through the Civil War, the decay and alienation experienced in the time of the WWI was already a familiar notion. Faulkner did not experience the Civil War himself, nor did he experience the splendour and noble tradition of the Antebellum South. He was instead surrounded by a strong past that was kept vigorously present through the telling and retelling of the events surrounding it. The Civil War explores how that conflict which ended less than forty years before Faulkner's birth played an outsized role in his fiction.

3.3. Cultural Roots

Since and even before the Civil War, the history of the relationship and perception of the Northern and Southern states have been strongly marked by stereotypes and prejudices. The South as a poor, devastated and mainly a distinctive region with the cultural humiliation of the lost war has, as any other such group, a great need to tell its story. This need has not yet diminished and is maintained and kept alive through constant retelling. It is a truth broadly acknowledged among Southern literary scholars that the South and Southern literature

¹ Don H Doyle. Faulkner's County. University of North Carolina Press. USA. 1997, p27

have been characterized by a strong sense of despair , tragic , comedy , destruction and longing . All these attributes make the Southern identity outside perception and its literature one-of-a kind . Southern literature receives a lot of praise and critical attention and it is widely celebrated . Therefore , one can unhesitatingly state that it is the South's special state that brings forth a unique type of literature and a large body of creative works by Southern great minds.

The question remains unanswered to what extent this identity and these widely known stereotypes are based on literary and cultural constructions and to what extent on actualities and real experiences . It is commonplace to say that construction and reconstruction are inevitable . Thus , the South's right and left image of the Mississippi is partly mirrored by its art and literature . The influential photographer Walker Evans has strongly perpetuated and influenced the image of the South through his creative art , most particularly in his book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* whereby he collaborated with the prominent journalist , poet , novelist and critic James Agee. They worked for Fortune magazine and were supposed to demonstrate sharecroppers during the Depression. And so , they depicted white , poor farmers in the Deep South depicting their hard lives , agonies , simple houses and belongings. Hence , Walker Evans's pictures represent "run-down shacks" , people dressed in rags , bare wooden rooms , filthy children , and plain schoolhouses looking like small barns., some aged faces showed poverty and hardship , children had the serious faces of adults.²

Correspondingly , Evans and Agee succeeded in depicting the people and their desperate state .With Evan's disdain for "artiness" and anything fashionable about photography , he showed the poor South with objectivity and a "hard-edged and no-nonsense approach"³ what is worth mentioning is that even before Evans worked on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* , which was published in 1941, he illustrated a reference book on Southern antebellum architecture *in 1935* ⁴ . He travelled the South visiting mansions , most

¹ Kidd Stuart . Visualizing The Poor White . A companion to the Literature and culture of the American South. Eds. Ma Blackwell. 2004. p 110

² The Report of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy in 1937 stated that 1.1million white families in the South were tenant farmers or sharecroppers , which forced them to live in extreme poverty with little hope of improvement . (for more details see Kidd p 110)

³ Ibid , 24

⁴ Ibid , 625

of them in ruins and abandoned . He pictured “mouldering and romantic plantations”¹ some of them unoccupied while others still inhabited like the Belle Hélène plantation house . Mellow in his 1999 book on Evans Walker paints some vivid images through the following expressive words :

It (the house) was in incipient decay but still occupied by the remnants of the once-prominent du Plessix family . the chicken coop and he yard ...indicated how low the family fortunes had fallen . A more commanding ... metaphor was the huge dead tree that had fallen , uprooted , in front of the once-grand but rotting colonnade - the ruin of a gone society .²

In 1936 , Evans travelled the South for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) as an agency member advises him with the purpose of “ showing the relationship of the land to the cultural decay”³ . In the same vein , a similar project was undertaken by Erskine Caldwell⁴, a Southern author , who illustrated in his 1937 documentation *You Have Seen Their Faces* which pictured the South's misery in gloomy and hopeless pictures .The latter insisted on the utmost importance to maintain and support the people's connection to the earth and soil expressing his dubious view on industrialism .

Twelve years later , in 1948 the famous magazine *Vogue* hired Walker Evans to photograph for a six-page spread for an article entitled Faulkner's Mississippi. Once more , the subjects were “ ruined plantation houses , muleteams in the plowed fields , tenant farm houses with dog-trots , crossroad stores ... cemeteries and stone monuments ”⁵ Moreover , it is fundamentally important to note that Evans's vivid genuine illustrations of the South , even Faulkner's South , were obviously not only a simple documentation of architecture and landscape , but also one of the passed culture and its

¹ Mellow James R . Walker Evans. New York . Perseus. 1999, p238

² Ibid , 235

³ Ibid , 287

⁴ Erskine Caldwell (1903-1987) was a Southern author who addressed the problems and issues of so-called white trash people in Georgia.

⁵ Ibid , 515

fragments. Indeed , they exemplified thoroughly the decaying and miserable status quo and shaped the picture of the South both within and outside of its borders . Evans's choice of objects is a serious statement in itself , something the assignment not necessarily had called for , and actively both mirrors and forms the perspective on Southern culture , its defeat , and the necessity to turn to the past to utterly understand it .

The pattern of reference and cultivation has started even before the Civil War , as early as the demarcation of the states of Virginia and north Carolina in the mid-18th century . The South started very early to draw a line between itself and regions that developed differently especially regarding differently especially regarding ethics , gender roles and morals .While this was perceived as isolationist tendencies and regression , the South tried even at this early stage to protect its ideals from progress perceived as deterioration .

This awareness , melancholy , and the picture of the South within and without its borders reflect upon literature and have immense impact on it . The social and cultural environment and the vivid oral tradition that helped preserve pieces of old ballads , tales , and myths from the times of the frontier and the antebellum period full of metaphors , irony and melancholy resulted in richly mythical poetics ¹

4. William Faulkner's Use of History

It is a truth generally acknowledged that Southern history is a mixture of fact and fiction . Romantic myth and historical fact are so intertwined that even historians found it extremely tough to separate between them . For so many decades , Americans living , whether in the Northern or Southern parts of the United States , have admired the Old South's picture as being the Golden Age of American history .

¹ Cowan Louise . The Southern Critics . An Introduction to the Criticism of John Crowe Ransom , Allen Tate , Donald Davidson , Robert Penn Warren , Cleanth Brooks and Andrew Lytle . University of Dallas Press . 1972.p 07

According to the myth , the Old South was a wide area of extensive and marvellous plantations . Southern gentlemen and ladies used to enjoy a life of leisure , they lived in Grecian-styled homes , surrounded by gardens whereby black slaves worked in the plantations during the day and sang and danced in the evening . Thus , everyone was happy – the old planter, house servants and field slaves - .¹ Therefore , the myth draws a picture of a tripartite Southern society made up of aristocrats , poor whites and slaves .

Extensive research , on the other hand , undertaken by some recent historians have proven that Southern society before the war was far from complex than popular tradition has claimed. To put it differently , some truths have been omitted² , such as the presence of a mass of yeomen farmers and recurrent threat of slave runways or rebellions , since not all of them seemed to be happy with their fate . Moreover , it is obvious that the tradition has exaggerated some attributes of the old order which were apparent in certain areas and not throughout the whole South , as the myth illustrates .³ But , even when historical evidence proves some falsity , many Americans could not deny customary beliefs .

Correspondingly, such a mixture of myth and history has been at the core of hundreds of novels. Starting with John Kennedy's *Sallow Barn* (1835) , set in Virginia . The novel paints an image of the Old South's aristocracy and its lifestyle . Moving on to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* , written in protest against the South's peculiar institution of slavery , make vivid use of the plantation myth . As a matter of fact , the south as it is portrayed in this literary creation is still a land of wide plantations . Several kind-hearted masters were employed in the novel , such as St.Claire , who is a bit too careless and kindly , and other tender-hearted ladies like Marie. St Clare and loving mistresses like Mrs. Shelby . Uncle Tom the reliable slave whose major concern is to please his master and care about his welfare , and aunt Chloe , as well , is the quintessential faithful and compassionate mammy . These traditional components are intermingled with sometimes eye-catching scenes, and other times tearful ones , in the sense that they depict slave families separated by sales and awful scenes of white cruelty , performed by evil men like Simon Legree .

¹ Francis Pendleton Gaines . *The Southern Plantation : A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition* . Gloucester , Massachusetts , 1962. P 13-14.

² *Ibid* , 143.

³ *Ibid* , 144 .

In the same respect , it is commonplace to state that every novelist willing to write about the South has to take into consideration the awkward mixture of Southern history and myth , which has been approached as popular legend . Therefore , he may accept that tradition as it has been delineated in the past , or he may seek to re-examine the facts and put them in order so that to explore his own myth of the South , and so did Faulkner .

Faulkner , as a son and a member of the South , has established his own myth out of the tradition and the historical facts of his hometown in his mythical kingdom whose history , myth , picture and events seem to be identical with those of all the South . No wonder , a thoughtful examination of Faulkner's fiction reveals much about his great use of his local history .

In the same vein , Faulkner's scholars have tirelessly tried to demonstrate his use of Southern history in considerable ways . To illustrate an example , John B. Cullen considers Jefferson as "Oxford transmuted"¹ And so , he selects actual events , people and places which Faulkner employs in his literary productions . By way of illustration , Cullen asserts that Faulkner hunted for years in the Mississippi Delta region when it was virtually nothing but a wilderness . His hunting stories are founded upon stories he heard while camping . The prodigious bear Old Ben of *Go Down Moses* is a fictional representation which refers to an unusually dog used in hunting for some years.² V.K Ratliff , originally referred to as Stuart by Faulkner , is another evocative illustration modelled upon John Suratt , who was a sewing machine salesman known for his joking and sharp trading .³ Correspondingly , Joe Christmas, the negro murderer in *Light in August* is a vivid depiction of the real Nelse Patton who killed Mrs. McMillan with a razor .⁴

However , according to Cullen , Faulkner relies on his local material heavily in the sense that it allows his imagination to transform the actual events so that they correspond to hid mythical world .To give an instance , the idiot Benjy Compson in Faulkner's 1929 *The Sound and the Fury* , is based on a doctor's son whose mind never developed . In fact , the real man was deprived of power , more than this , his sisters unlike Caddy Compson , were all

¹ John B. Cullen and Floyd C. Watkins . Old Times in the Faulkner County-Chapel Hill. North Caroline . 1961.p5 .

² Ibid , 12-13.

³ Ibid , 73-74 .

⁴ Ibid , 89-98 .

ladies . The Snopeses finally are exaggerated since they epitomize all the evil attributes of the people Faulkner knew.¹ Therefore , Cullen through his divergent selection and demonstration of characters and fictional details makes it clear that Faulkner borrows enormously from the actual events of his homeland . To put it differently , Lafayette County's history and details are omnipresent in Faulkner's fictional world , the world of words .

In the same strain , Ward L. Miner ² follows the same patten provided by Cullen , but in a wider sense . Miner draws a picture on a geographical description of Lafayette county , the gives a thoughtful account of Jefferson's history from its setting by the Indians around the year 1540 onwards . The historical events and the geographical instances provided are paralleled and other times contrasted with Faulkner's legend . But , Miner reveals Faulkner's immense reliability on the oral history of his hometown . And so , Miner validates this idea saying that “ Faulkner's account is more real than actuality because it is true to the spirit of the people , if not true in fact ”³

Additionally , Miner highlights the fact that Faulkner's view of Southern history involves a sense of moral values , pointing out that for Faulkner the South is cursed since it is often overshadowed as a decaying region . Indeed the early settlers attempted to evaluate nature , yet their fellow men have adopted a new code , that of money . So , for them the materialistic interest became much more valuable than the planter's code of dignity , justice and honour . Again , Miner endorses this point saying that “ the South lost the Civil War because it was morally weak . ”⁴

As a further matter , Faulkner is approached quite differently by George Marion O'Donnel , who considers Faulkner as a traditional man living in a new changing South⁵ which is in a sense anti-traditional . For O'Donnell , Faulkner's novels are a series of myths founded upon serious conflict between the old customs and moral conducts (old order) and anti-traditional , evil materialistic world (new order) whose representatives crystallize the new code that of self-interest . The present clash may be referred to as a Sartoris – Snopes clash , although real women vary from one novel to the other .

¹ Ibid , 99 .

² Ward L. Miner . The World of William Faulkner . Durham North Carolina . 1952 .

³ Ibid 110-111 .

⁴ Ibid , 133-134 .

⁵ George Marion O'donnell . Faulkner's Mythology : A Collection of Critical Essays , edited by Robert Penn Warren . Englewood Cliffs . New Jersey . 1966 . p 23-33 .

In *The Sound and the Fury* , Quentin Compson is depicted as a symbol of the traditional Sartoris world . His selfish brother Jason has abandoned his heritage for the values of Snopesism . The rest of the decaying family (the Compsons) seek to escape reality : Mrs compson in drugs , Mr Compson in nihilism and philosophy , and Benjy in his idiocy .¹ In the *Unvanquished* , Miss Rosa Millard , who represents the traditional or Sartoris aspect opposes Ab Snopes . In this clash , Miss Rosa Millard loses when she is murdered , yet her death is revenged by her grandson , Bayard Sartoris . Additionally , the Snopeses become essentially allies of the invading northern armies against whom the Sartorises are fighting against.

In *Sartoris* , finally , the conflict is between the Snopeses in the 1920's and Bayard Sartoris . The latter is aware of his family's tradition and history of violent death in noble action , yet since he belongs to the " Snopes ' world " as he fights in a " Snopes war " (which draws insight on World War I) rather than a war in which individual heroism is possible , he feels cheated and therefore reacts with recklessness and meaningless violence which lead to his death in an airplane he knows will crash .

Malcolm Cowley shares and emphasizes the same approach taken by O'Donnell as he believes that Faulkner considers the Old South as essentially more moral than the New South . Indeed , Cowley renders Faulkner's work as a legend of the South. The Old South was invaded by aristocrats like the Sartorises and mainly by new men like Thomas Sutpen who sought to establish a solid and permanent social order . As a further matter , the planters ' code seemed to be righteous in multiple instances , yet the whole system was based on slavery , which was perceived as a curse that destroyed the Old order . As a result of this mess , the Civil War as fought and lost . After the Civil War , the old aristocrats first had to fight Northern carpet-baggers and later on Southern landless whites as portrayed in Faulkner's novels by the Snopes clan who corrupted the South .

In Faulkner's novels , the Southern society is marked by confusion , degeneration , disintegration and social decay . And so , the descendants of the aristocrats of the Old order seek defeat or death , lose their steadiness or exemplify the values of Snopesism .² According

¹ Ibid , 23-26 .

² Ibid 102-105

to Cowley, Faulkner is essentially “an epic or bardic poet in prose, a creator of myths that he weaves together into a legend of the South.”¹

William Van O'Connor², on the other hand, criticizes the approach taken by O'Donnell. For him, Faulkner did not place much weight to render history in his writings in the sense that he did not begin writing with a scheme of history worked out. His viewpoint on the Old South differed from one literary creation to another. To cite an instance, Faulkner in *Sartoris*, defends the South whereby his attitude is broadly romantic, and he is quite concerned with the bravery and gallantry of the defenders of the South. In *The Unvanquished*, Faulkner becomes more and more aware of the South; he grows aware of the fact that bravery may become reckless heroics and honour an excuse for violence.³ In *Absalom Absalom!*, Faulkner employs *Sutpen* as a strong means to crystallize “the essence of the history of the South.”⁴

Following the same pattern, Melvin Backman fails to agree with O'Donnell's argument that Faulkner's novels focus heavily on a Sartoris – Snopes clash. Backman considers that such a division is obvious. It rejects Sutpen and his kind, the new rich, self-made aristocrat who ruled the South. In point of fact, except Sartoris, all the members of the ruling clans of Yoknapatawpha were new men and not of aristocratic origin. They were men “on the make”⁵, an evil and violent generation caught up in ambition and self-interest. These men pretended to be a part of the privileged aristocracy. They ruled the South and they should be assigned responsibility for its fall.⁶ Moreover, the Sartoris-Snopes division does not take into consideration the great majority of the people of the Old South, who were farmers and neither planters nor poor whites.⁷

As a further matter, Warren Beck⁸ rejects the idea that Faulkner idealizes the Old South. According to him, Faulkner's fiction suggests that the evil practice of slavery was so great that only the complete destruction society founded upon that peculiar institution and a return to primitivism could expiate that immoral act. Very unjust was the aristocracy of the

¹ Ibid, 109

² William Van O'Connor. *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner*. Minneapolis. 1954

³ Ibid, 114-115

⁴ Ibid, 94

⁵ Ibid, 117.

⁶ Ibid, 596-598.

⁷ Ibid, 597.

⁸ Warren Beck. *Faulkner and the South*. *Antioch Review*, I. March 1961. P 82-94

Old South that the only legacy it could provide to its descendents was degeneration, disillusionment, brutality and inhumanity. Therefore, it could be said that the history of the South is a tragic story of collapse from John Sartoris to Thomas Sutpen to the Post-bellum Sartorises to the Compsons to the Snopeses to Jim Bond. And so, the pattern of Southern history is degeneration.¹

Additionally, Charles H. Nilon² asserts that Faulkner's novels explore that idea that one can understand fully the present only through a great knowledge of the past and that present evils grow from past evils. Actually, there are two major significant evils from the past which continue to torment the present: first and foremost, the desire of some to own and possess the land, which God intended all men to share, secondly, the exploitation of the Negro to work the land so that the white aristocracy might live in wealth and at ease. Besides, the two evils play a preeminent role in the destructions of the Indians, the decline of the aristocrats and the decline of the Snopeses. Consequently, it is of fundamental importance to state that Nilon elucidates that Faulkner believes that the South is aware of its sins and all the evils, although it has been powerless to correct them, yet the South must and will rid itself of them.³

In a like manner, Irving Howe⁴ considers Faulkner's novels as a vivid reflection of the experience of a people provoked into a war which they fought heroically and lost. They lived in grime, misery and hopelessness after the war, more than this, they lost power to a new breed of men.⁵ Howe asserts that Faulkner voices the collapse of the South through the disintegration of families and clans. The cycle of most of his written is a chronicle of the rise and fall of families, each exemplifying a specific pattern of conduct. The response that each clan makes to modern life delineates one of the various possible courses that descendents of the Southern aristocracy could make after the Civil War. By way of illustration, the Sartoris represent a tendency to carelessness and self-deterioration. The Compsons, on the other hand, exhibit extreme disintegration. Isaac McCaslin seeks expiation for the evils of his ancestors.⁶ In his feeling about the South, Howe elucidates that Faulkner displays almost

¹ Ibid, 91-94.

² Charles H. Nilon. *Faulkner and the Negro*. New York. 1965

³ Ibid, 01-04.

⁴ Irving Howe. *A Critical Study*. Elephant Paperbacks. Chicago. 1991.

⁵ Ibid, 27-28.

⁶ Ibid, 08-09.

every possible conceivable attitude . At times , he seems to accept the burden of history , he attempts to test it , and sometimes he even opposes it . Besides , his work exemplifies a tension between pride in Southern tradition , which he admires , and repugnance at the memory of slavery he condemns .

Basically , William Faulkner's novels move from away from the romanticism of Bayard Sartoris in *The Unvanquished* to a more realistic attitude toward the wrongdoings of the Old Order as depicted by Isaac McCalin in *Go Down Moses* or the negative approach to the Old Order glimpsed in the portrayal of Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom Absalom !* .¹ Eventually , for Howe, Faulkner sees the aristocrats of the Old South as a combination of “ Sartoris courage , tradition , and chivalry and Sutpen will , energy , and ruthlessness .”²

In the final analysis , one can unhesitatingly say that most of the critical work done to date has approached Faulkner's use of Southern history and myth by attempting to outline a broad pattern of history extending from the Old Order , which Faulkner both admired and denounced , to the modern South characterized by mechanism , self- interest and decay . Some critics believe Faulkner views Southern history in terms of a series of conflicts or contrasts : Sartoris versus Snopes and traditional versus antitraditional .

5. William Faulkner's Myth of the South

Like any other myth , the Southern myth is a story or even a cluster of stories that elucidates the deepest attitudes and reflects the most fundamental experiences of a people . In this particular case , the Southern myth's subject casts light on the fate of a ruined homeland . The homeland had genuinely and proudly insisted that it alone should determine its destiny ; provoked into a war impossible to win , it had nevertheless fought to its last strength . But the homeland fell , and it is from this decay came misery and squalor .

Moreover , Faulkner's view of Southern history is neither traditional nor anti traditional . He neither accepts the myths of the past nor does he completely reject them . His

¹ Ibid , 32-33 .

² Ibid , 74 .

historical method involves a probing into the past and a testing of it .He seems to be searching for an ideal time in history , in other terms , a golden age of perfect happiness and brotherhood . And so , he examines the myths which point to such times , and he tests them for truth . The structure of his 1936 novel *Absalom , Absalom !* with its several narrators attempting to reconstruct the past , suggests the difficulty of finding historical truth.¹ Each account of Sutpen's career moves from fact to myth , a myth which may or may not be true (truth) but which is intended to catch what the narrator believes is the spirit of the past . Moreover , it is difficult to separate the truth from the legend . The past is always veiled in some mystery , and it is impossible to know the complete truth .

As a member of the South , Faulkner knows and cherishes the legends of his native South . However , he is also aware of what historians call fact , and he feels compelled to deal with reality . And so , he tests the myths which point to periods in the South's history when life was blissful and ideal. Furthermore , his fiction portrays the tension between fact and legend , a tension which must have been real to Faulkner himself . Out of his search , he creates a new myth of the Old South .

As a matter of fact , he examines the myths about the wilderness paradise with its noble savages and finds them to be only dreams. Many of the men of the wilderness were men who loved the land , who had the strength , courage and will to remain in the wilderness and carve a civilized society out of it . They were noble and unique , large- than-life men , yet they were also quite obsessed with the desire to possess wealth , prestige and power . Their greed led them to exploit the land , more than this , their evil willingness to possess the blacks and treat them as inferiors - as objects rather than men – brought a curse upon the South .

Correspondingly , Faulkner felt a strong need to look back to the plantation South so that to explore the myths which depict an ideal feudalistic society in the Old South. In doing so , he contrasts the legendary Southern gentlemen with men like Thomas Sutpen who literally dug a plantation out of the wilderness with much courage , will , ruthlessness and brutality . Additionally , Faulkner sees in the ante-bellum South men of pride , courage and honour , yet he still admits the evil and horror upon which their aristocratic existence is built: the peculiar institution of slavery which denies the black men the right to be referred to as human beings and is at the origin of “ the curse ” which has not yet been lifted .

¹ Olga Vickery , *The Novels of William Faulkner : A Critical Interpretation* . Baton Rouge . 1964 , p86

Looking over the shoulder to the past , Faulkner turns to the Lost Cause and its valiant heroes . On the one hand , he pictures gallant men fighting for the sake of victory and honour of their homeland , seeking to defend their aristocratic and rural way of life against an industrial and greedy North . On the other hand , he exposes the true reasons behind fighting in the war that was not waged to end slavery but to defend it - by splitting the nation into two different blocks - including a strong and evil desire to hold on wealth and power and mainly to maintain the institution of slavery by advancing at the expense of poor blacks . It was dreadfully difficult for Faulkner to believe that during the Civil War, Southerners expressed a great deal about their peculiar commitment to slavery . As the historian C.Van Woodward suggested “ the end of slavery in the South can be described as the death of a society , though elsewhere it could more easily be characterized as the liquidation of an investment ”¹

By the same token , Faulkner elucidates the Civil War as God's judgement if not punishment on the South for its past sins of exploitation . the South did fight bravely in the face of a certain defeat , yet the cause remains unjust . Additionally , Faulkner regarded the Civil War to have been a mistake or an ineffectual tragedy and it is no wonder that the war solved nothing since it could not lift ‘ the curse’ , for the negro was still ‘ nigger’ and not brother .

When one examines Faulkner as a moralist , his previously mentioned tendency to portray the Old South of legend becomes understandable . Faulkner unquestionably has a nostalgic feeling for the antebellum world of the cotton magnates because of this his story of the civil war , even while borrowing much from his local history , is far from a critical interpretation . Therefore , what needs to be said is that when Faulkner defends the old order , he actually is not idealizing the plantation myth or the plantation aristocracy . Instead , he is praising a moral order , a code of personal dignity , courage , honour and integrity . It is the code that the Civil War undermined .

Furthermore , in Faulkner's view , the past is not ideal , but the present is even worse. Modern man has inherited the evils of the past : the greed , the willingness to exploit , the fear of race , the grief of separation As he has lost many of the virtues of the past – the love of the land , a concept of the honour , pride , courage and loyalty . The latter features were regarded as unshakable moral conducts and values that aroused a large sense of immobility

¹ Kolchin Peter . American Slavery .Penguin Books Ltd .England .1993 , p54

and exemplify wholeheartedly the conservative world in which Faulkner had lived and grown up .

Correspondingly , the descendents of the old aristocratic South have become degenerate either due to the fact that they have not been able to bury their dead heroes and are unable to live in the present or because they have adopted the codes of the new modern yet materialistic world . Almost all modern Southern whites are contaminated to view the Negro as their forefathers did , as an object rather than a human . What establishes the validity of what is said is Fredrick's words : “ The white man has forced the Negro to be always a Negro rather than another human being in their dealings.”¹ , In other terms , it simply means that the Negro is still enslaved by the white man's prejudice .

Additionally , Faulkner still believes that the ‘ curse’ may be lifted . Even though , the past and present have been burdened by injustice and the inability to recognize human kinship, there is still a hope for the future . In Faulkner's view , hope lies in the ability of the black man to learn self restraint , honesty , dependability , purity - to act as well as the best of white man.”² More than this , he must endure that by his long and patient suffering , he stands as a vivid and living symbol of their guilt to the whites around him . Therefore , he remains as Lucas Beauchamp , “ a tyrant over the white conscience .”³ of the South , or like Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* a strong pillar of stability and an epitome of strength and compassion .

Some day , the South must abolish racial injustice , but it must accomplish this act by itself because the lifting of the curse can come only as an act of conscience . It can not be forced from the outside , yet the curse may be lifted “ in a thousand or two thousand years in AmericaBut not now ! . Not Now ... We will have to wait .”⁴

¹ Fredrick L , Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner , editors . Faulkner in the University. Charlottesville .1959.p211

² Ibid

³ William Faulkner. *Intruder in the Dust* . New York.1948.p199

⁴ William Faulkner , *Go Down Moses* . New York.1942 . p 361-363.

Conclusion

With the intention of recapitulating all the key points that were highlighted within this momentous chapter , an umbrella statement must be presented . Indeed , it helps getting a succinct and clear idea related to the points that were tackled over . Each point is going to be addressed .

Within this chapter , a wide range of central and significant points were amplified. First and foremost , one has to note that the first chapter as being an introductory one attempted to provide the reader with a close insight into Faulkner's native soil , the region and the atmosphere into which Faulkner lived . As stated previously , the South into which Faulkner had lived and grown up was fundamentally based on some unshakable moral values and conducts that used to form the backbone of the Southern aristocracy. In Faulkner's Southern world , life , lifestyle and culture are inseparably entwined . Indeed , the home soil

with its history and the language of the native people is not simply a source of inspiration but , much more than this , a striking driving force for the Southern author , and mainly Faulkner .

One of the essential matters that was addressed in the opening chapter is the tradition and pattern of Southern literature and the flowering of the Southern Renaissance being a palpable era that witnessed a crucial shift in Southern writing . No wonder , William Faulkner was at the head of this movement as later on he was followed by a host of other literary figures who attempted yet successfully to address American themes and subjects.

A key point to note is that the root of all evil and the curse that surrounded the South have been exposed . The Civil War and the Reconstruction era left the South culturally and economically distinct and mainly isolated . What needs to be said is that the War between the sisters (states) only finished what had started much earlier . The Southern claim to a special position , its feeling of moral and cultural superiority and distinctiveness , and its chosen isolation have its roots as early as in the beginning 18th century . These feelings and the need to cultivate and preserve a certain type of community and individual perceived as being superior only recurred even stronger after the shameful defeat the South suffered . The gap between the North and the South depended the tensions enormously. Hence , literature as form of art became a powerful tool and an expressive means of the peculiar Southern situation and its history of the war that had left the Southern landscape wounded and drained .

One of the chief elements that were also highlighted in this chapter is Faulkner's authority as a guide to Southern history which is by no means unimpeachable . Actually , he was careless with facts , blind to various issues about the South and blacks in particular . A key point to remember is that Faulkner made a fantastic use of his historical material to nourish his writings . As one could not get a clear-cut vision on Faulkner's position because he sometimes seemed to admire and cherish the Old Order , yet other times , he rejected the values adopted by the people of the New South . And for this , some critics believe that Faulkner crystallizes Southern history in terms of flaws and clashes .

Another point that was tackled , which is worthy of note is Faulkner's examination of the Southern myth . He has set his pride in the past against his despair over the present , and from this counter position has come much of the tension in his work . In Irving Howe's words " he (Faulkner) has investigated the myth itself ; wondered about the relation between

the Southern tradition he admires and that memory of Southern slavery to which he is compelled to return ; tested not only he present by the past , but also the past by the myth and finally the myth by that morality which has slowly emerged from this entire process of exploration”¹ This testing of the myth , though by no means , the only important activity in Faulkner's work and is basic to the Yoknapatawpha novels and stories , and from it comes his growing vision as an artist .

¹ Irving Howe. The Southern Myth and William Faulkner . American Quarterly, Vol 3 , No 4 (Winter 1951) pp 357.362

Chapter Two

Locating the Stage

Introduction

It is a truth generally acknowledged that William Faulkner's writings offered him a salient chance to be one of the major representatives of the Southern reality. Indeed, Faulkner could not help but write about the region that was exquisitely drawn in his memory. From the moment Faulkner opened his eyes, it was the South's air he inhaled. In point of fact, it is thanks to this region (the South) that is regarded as the door that led him all the way to eminence. The South for him served as a powerful material for his genuine creations. More than this, his birthplace offered William Faulkner refuge for writing. It is almost impossible to ignore William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha when one deals with the South. His fictional world is particularly influential to the subsequent Mississippian writers and puts pressure on them to compose meaningful literature.

No wonder, the land William Faulkner paints is what makes his writings so impactful and eye catching. As he was born and died in Mississippi, and he wrote specifically about this region. Understanding Mississippi is essential to understanding Faulkner's works. The American political scientist V.O. Key, Jr, in his influential work, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* illuminates Mississippi's distinction in the South: "Northerners, provincials that they are, regard the South as one large Mississippi."¹ It would seem that the absurdity of the region is magnified in Mississippi at this time. It is a region all of its own yet it also strangely can encompass the entirety of the South's history.

As a boy William Faulkner did not need to study the history of the South; he lived in its shadow and experienced its decline. Moreover, the land to which he had returned was itself like an old battlefield striped by scars of war and its people seemed still to be living with a flawed yet cherished past. The influential Faulkner transformed his beloved homeland: Mississippi into a mythical world, the great stage on which he could perform his aesthetic experiments, known as "Yoknapatawpha County" which made his written art, not only unique and impactful, but also his literary creations succeeded to cross the country's national borders to be read and known as universal literature. Therefore, it is not surprising that the South formed the backbone of his marvellous fiction.

¹ Key, V.O, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. Knoph Publishing. New York.1949. p229

Chapter Two: Locating the Stage

One of Faulkner's intense concerns that laid him to create the Yoknapatawpha cycle was to unveil some serious aspects about the southern community to which he is bound to return. Indeed, Faulkner's fascination with his "native keystone" and high experimentation produced an oeuvre consisting of 18 books of novels and short stories published between 1929 and 1962 in which he reflected the geographical and cultural background of his native Mississippi, exploring, on the other hand, the chaotic life history of the South while developing insightful examinations and renditions.

Mississippi as an inheritance, a living archive had drawn from Faulkner as perhaps nothing else could have the recognition of where lay his overwhelming subject. His task would be to engrave the old (and ongoing) in the new. Oxford and Lafayette County, Mississippi in the great narrative cycle he conceived of as Yoknapatawpha County.

This chapter attempts to further the insights touched upon in the preceding one. At this point, an attempt is made to examine Faulkner's fictional kingdom: The Yoknapatawpha County. It is of essence to speak of Faulkner's fictive space in greater length so that to get a grander insight into Faulkner's deep attachment and commitment to his fictional county which is modelled after the real life county that he grew up in. Understanding the fabrication of Yoknapatawpha helps (us) understand Faulkner's perception of art. Therefore, it is of great importance to understand the author in order to understand his text as it is of utmost significance to understand context so that to understand the text and Yoknapatawpha County is the context of nearly most of Faulkner's cycle of fiction.

1. Yoknapatawpha County : A Place in the American South

Among American novelists of the Twentieth Century , only William Faulkner has created an imaginary world that is almost complete in itself . The world of Yoknapatawpha , though of great fascination or simply as a spectacle of drama and event , is also the setting for a complex moral chronicle in which a popular myth and an almost legendary past yield , something quite rare in American literature : a deep sense of the heavy burdens and grandeur of history.

William Faulkner , alone among the significant Twentieth Century novelists , did not cut himself off from his roots , he keeps returning to the same imaginary locale : his Yoknapatawpha County , 2400 square miles in an area , bounded by the Tallahatchie and Yoknapatawpha Rivers , and comprising mainly farm lands and pine hills . Faulkner's intense preoccupation with this mythical county indicates that it serves him as more than a literary convenience , a place known and used . It is related to those moral and social problems that most urgently beset him . In his better novels locale and theme have a way of seeming almost inseparable . Therefore , to describe his world with some fullness and accuracy is to approach the central motives of his work .

In the same strain , Owen Robinson affirms that the Yoknapatawpha county “ is based ostensibly on Faulkner's own home region in northern Mississippi.”¹ . He ; however , states that has emphasized the fictionality of his literary world . As a native Mississippian , William Faulkner had a deep and genuine knowledge of the American South and its history . This knowledge has inspired him to create his own fictional world . In his literary body of gen, Faulkner created his own cosmos , mingling his knowledge of history and the people of Mississippi with his talent for telling stories . In an interview with him in 1956 , Faulkner responds as follows :

¹ Robinson Owen . *Creating Yoknapatawpha : Readers and Writers in Faulkner's Fiction*. Routledge . New York. 2006 , p 02 .

Beginning with Sartoris I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it , and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a gold mine of other people ; I created cosmos of my own . I can move these people around like God .¹

The above interview of William Faulkner appears to be a vivid testimonial that William Faulkner could not resist the heavy influence of his birthplace . In other terms , he could not escape the South , its past and the effect of that past on Southern present . Mainly , he discovered that his own “ little postage stamp of native soil ” was worth writing about . In pursuit of this aim , Faulkner transforms his knowledge and personal experience of north Mississippi into Yoknapatawpha . He realizes that the task of the novelist is to mediate between the imagination and the personal experience of his actual world in order to produce a world that could be conceived by his readers .

As a novelist , William Faulkner realizes that it is essential for him to have his own cosmos , like a canvas to the painter , “ for the sake of writing” . Conrad endorses this point saying that this truth that “ every novelist must begin by creating for himself a world , great or little , in which he can honestly believe . This world cannot be made otherwise than in his own image”² He goes on by saying that this world must bear a resemblance to “ something already familiar to the experience , the thoughts and the sensations of his readers . At the heart of fiction , even the least worthy of name , some sort of truth can be found”³

Testifying of a particular place : the South , Faulkner’s fiction is set in a special location – Yoknapatawpha County , created upon the real model of Faulkner’s native Lafayette County in Mississippi . Explaining the term ‘ Yoknapatawpha’ , Gwynn and Blotner state that the term is of a Chickasaw origin meaning “ water flows slow through the flat land” . In the same respect , Faulkner interpreted , in a class session at the University of

¹ Faulkner’s Interview with Jean Stein , Paris Review

² Conrad Joseph . Notes on Life and Letters . An Electronic Classics Series Publication 2013 Hazleton Canada.p10.

³ Ibid , 10 .

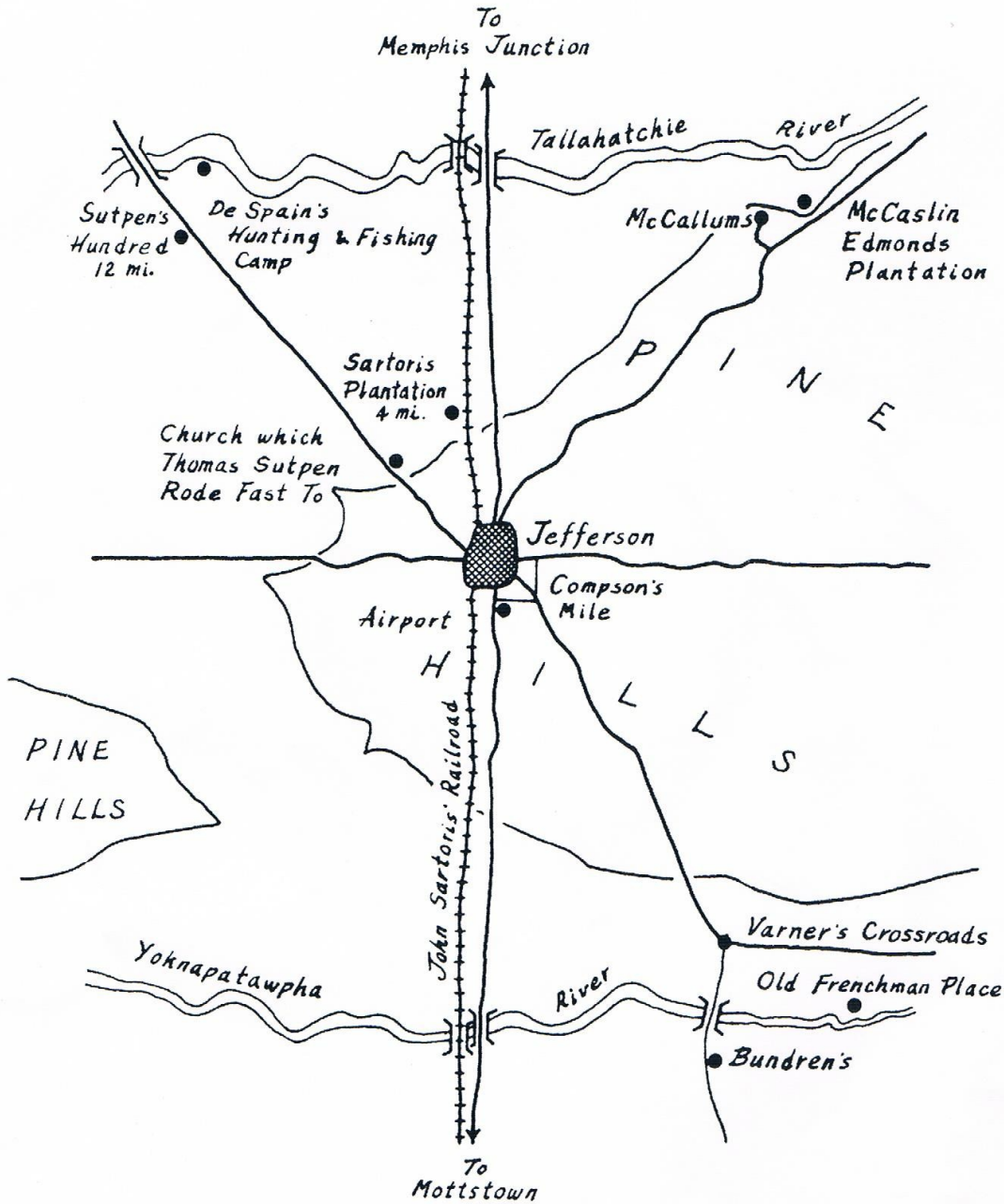
Virginia , that Yoknapatawpha is “ a Chickasaw Indian name signifying water runs slow through fat land”¹ Linguistically , the term is a combination that consists of two words : *yaakni* and *patafa*. In the *Native American Place Names in Mississippi* , Keith A. Baca verifies that *yaakni* , “land” is the short form of “ Yoknapatawpha” , pronounced / Yok ‘nuh puh tau fuh / and from the short form , *yaakni* , *Yocona* is derived . This new derivational Chickasaw term is assigned to the river known as Yocona River . *Patafa* means to rip , to slash , cut open , to plow . The compound form *Yaakni ’ Patafa* refers to the river , “ cutting open the land” or “ plowed ground”².

Yoknapatawpha County is deemed to be the greatest imaginary place in the twentieth century fiction. It has incalculable influences on later writers to invent imaginary places for their setting . Undoubtedly , the county of Jefferson , Mississippi was highly idolized by Faulkner . He cherished his region so excessively that he implemented it in most of his fiction. A good clarification for this matter is delivered by Cleanth Brooks , R . W. B . Lewis, Robert Penn Warren as follows : “ The fact that William Faulkner was a native not of Virginia or south Carolina , but of Mississippi , is of some importance . His state was a kind of quintessence of the Old South... Its rawness- in the 1820’s Mississippi was still frontier county – made for an intensification of its southern quality , for its governing ideal was “Southern” to start with , not like that Virginia at its founding , a reflection of English customs and ideas”.³

¹ Gwynn , Fredrick Landis and Blotner , Joseph Leo. *Faulkner in the University* , University of Virginia Press . USA.1995.p 74

² Baca Keith . *A Native American Place Names in Mississippi* . University of Mississippi Press .2007 , p 134-135

³ Cleanth Brooks , Lewis R.W.B. and Robert Penn Warren . *American Literature : The Makers and the Making* . St Martin’s Press . New York . 1974



**YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTY,
MISSISSIPPI**

Fig .1. A composite map of Yoknapatawpha County , Mississippi developed from Faulkner's maps of Yoknapatawpha in *Absalom Absalom!* , and in *The Portable Faulkner* .

Chapter Two: Locating the Stage

Yoknapatawpha County is , according to its “ Sole Owner and Proprietor”¹ William Faulkner , located in northern Mississippi between the Tallahatchie River on the north and the Yoknapatawpha River on the south . Like any other county , Faulkner’s county has its capital as well . Placed at the intersection of roads to Memphis , Mottstown , Sutpen’s Hundred , McClum’s home , and Frenchman’s Bend . Moreover , Yoknapatawpha’s capital Jefferson resembles to a great extent Faulkner’s Oxford since both towns (fictional and real) share some common attributes like the Confederate soldier monument on the main square , stores on the square ...etc . As a further matter , Faulkner has provided his readers with all the geographical details of the Yoknapatawpha County so that to give a vivid image of his hometown . The mythical county has an area of 2,400 square miles (6,200 square kilometres). Most of the eastern half of the county is pine hill county .

William Faulkner’s fiction spots light on the history of his Yoknapatawpha as well . In accord with the dominant American colonial mythology , his county was populated by the Chickasaw Indian tribe till 1832 , when they ceded their land to the USA government and moved to Oklaholma . White settlers came to Yoknatpatawpha around 1800 , and soon it became the home of many recognizable Fautlkner’s families such as the McCaslins , the Compsons , the Sartorises , the Snopeses , the Bundrens , the Sutpens and many others .

Prior to the Civil War , the county was composed of various large plantations : Louis Grenier’s in the South east , McCaslin’s in the North east , Sutpen’s in the North west , Compson’s and Sartoris’s in the immediate vicinity of Jefferson . Later on , the county became mainly small farms . And so , “ By 1936 , the population was 15,611 , of which 6,298 were whites and 9,313 were black . As of the census of 2000 , there were 38,744 people , 14,373 households , and 8321 families residing in the county . The population density was 61 people per square mile . The 16,587 housing units at an average density of 26 per square mile. The racial makeup of the county was 71,85% white , 20.05 % black or of an African American origins , 0.16% Native American , 1.67% Asian , 0.01% Pacific Islander , 0.42% from other races and 0.84 from two or more races . 1.10% of the population was Hispanic or Latino of any race ”. ²

¹ Hughes Richard . *Absalom Absalom !* . Vintage Books . London . 1993 , p 314-315

²Irving Howe . William Faulkner . A Critical Study .An Elephant Paperback , Ivan R.Deer, Inc Publisher . Chicago. 1991.p 80-81 .

Chapter Two: Locating the Stage

Faulkner heeded Sherwood Anderson's advice, one of his closest friends who encouraged and suggested to Faulkner to return to Oxford and write about the people and places he best knew since he was quite familiar with his homeland and its background. Thus, the result was one of the most remarkable turnarounds in literary history. Moreover, A. Robert Lee, a British Professor of American Literature at Nihon University once asserted: "More silent could not have been spoken. Faulkner's impulse to make art of life, fiction of history, now and then as if unstoppably had found its truest expression in reworking the lore and stored up memories of his upbringings".¹

Following the same pattern, Robert Penn Warren, the prominent poet, critic, novelist and teacher at Kentucky (USA) has considered Faulkner as a bright young introvert with a rebellious spirit who might have viewed the prospect of spending his life in a small town like Oxford, Mississippi during the early part of the Twentieth Century:

The South which Faulkner had grown up in the particularly rural South was cut-off, inward-turning, backward-looking. It was a culture frozen in its virtues and ices, and even for the generation that grew up after World War I, that South offered an image of massive immobility in all ways, an image, if one was romantic, of the unchangeableness of the human condition, beautiful, sad, painful, tragic – sunlight slanting over a mellow autumn field, a field more precious for the fact that its yield had been meager.²

Furthermore, a student at the University of Virginia asked Faulkner "Why so many of the best Southern writers write about the degeneration of the old aristocracy".³ For this matter, Faulkner indicated that he had no answer to give. He agreed that what a Southern writer puts into his fiction could have sociological implications; he made it plain though he was himself interested in writing about people. And when another questioner asked him why he sometimes severely satirized the South, Faulkner replied: "It is my country; my native land and I love it. I am not trying to satirize it".⁴ He accepted that the South was cursed and

¹ Lee, Robert A. William Faulkner. The Yoknapatawpha Fiction. Vision Press London and St Martin's Press. New York 1990. p 11.

² Penn Warren, Robert. Introduction to Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays. Paperback Prentice-Hall. USA. 1973. p 03-04.

³ Ramanathan, S. Literary works of William Faulkner. ABD Publishers Jaipur Rajasthan. India. 2005. p 09-23

⁴ Ibid, 20.

had its faults , yet he convincingly asserted that “ I will not try to correct them (faults) when I am writing about a story because I am writing about people then”.¹ Thus , Faulkner as a southerner felt that it was his duty to write about his beloved homeland .

Correspondingly , William Faulkner has excelled in inventing the fictional and imaginary county which provided the solid basis for his written art . His works explore the distinct heritage of the American South where he lived all his life and “ provided the geographical and cultural background of his short stories and novels”² . One of Faulkner’s major concerns was to portray his county in the form of fiction . As a writer with technical excellence , he made a fantastic use of it to provide the readers with the best fiction of his times.

The use of an assorted and array of literary techniques did not go astray . Instead , it enabled him to be ranked high and to be set apart as a writer worth to be emulated and admired. There are a miscellaneous range of elements and techniques that propelled some writers to follow his path . One of the paramount and predominant technique employed by Faulkner is having adopting a complex and ambiguous style .

Indeed , the complex and hard to be deciphered style contributes enormously to the ornamentation of his Yoknapatawpha stories. Another preeminent worth mentioning technique that is strongly associated with the name of William Faulkner is Stream of Consciousness which is frequently used interchangeably with monologue . It is a literary technique whereby a character speaks out his thoughts and thus they are exemplified in words

Furthermore , it is quite essential to state that the divergent techniques helped Faulkner to be admired and emulated . The influential critics : Alfred Bendixen and James Nagel endorse the previously stated points concerning the elements and techniques employed by Faulkner in his Yoknapatawpha cycle of fiction as follows : “ No other writer captured such depth in his portrayal of a region as did Faulkner and no one employed more other complex strategies of narrative method , structure and thematic development than he did in his remarkable stories and novels”³

¹ Ibid , 21 .

² Lewis , Windham . Contemporary Literary Criticism . Edited by Stine , Jean . Published by Gale Cengage . Vol-28 , 1984. P 135 .

³Bendixen Alfred , Nagel , James . A Companion to the American Short Story .Oxford : John Wiley & Sons. Oxford 12 Fèvr. 2010

Relying on his background, Faulkner had the base to write about his imaginary county, with its half-real and half-imaginary characters. He exposes to the reader the historical background and the present culture of the people, stressing customs and modes of life. In addition, he uses events from his own family, history as well as to that of his county. All the books in the Yoknapatawpha County series are related.

To cite an instance, some events take place in one story and are later explained in another, or a character is used in one book and is employed in another book without introductory remarks. Martin Kreiswirth validates this point stating that Faulkner inhabited his mythical kingdom with characters that “don’t just move from page one to page 320 of one book ... there is continuity between them all like a blood-stream which flows from page one through to page 20.000 ... The same blood, muscle and tissue bind the characters together”¹

As a deduction, Yoknapatawpha County, for Faulkner, was the land of his heart’s desire which he painted, celebrated, glorified and mainly made it known to the world through his body of art. He devoted his time in bringing out the detailed aspects of a life filled with chaos and torment, depicting evocative images of the people living in the South of the United States.

Additionally, the result of his long cherished dream and strong devotion to his homeland and Lafayette County most precisely, made him pay a rich tribute to salute his land and adoring it as he always felt proud to call it “my apocryphal county” which compromises both soul and soil of the American South, inventing a huge comparison between its mythical and real history.

¹ Martin Kreiswirth. William Faulkner. The Making of a Novelist. University of Georgia Press. Georgia. 2008, p 105

2. Yoknapatawpha County as a Microcosm of the US South

It is plainly evident that William Faulkner's fictional County "Yoknapatawpha" is not a real place, no map of Mississippi can reveal such a location. Though fictional, Yoknapatawpha County is perhaps the most vividly drawn and evocatively realized locale in all of American literature. However, it is of essence to state that it is Faulkner's magic ability, as a creative writer, to convert the local geography into a fictional world. Indeed, he draws his materials from Lafayette County and utilizes them to create Yoknapatawpha.

As a native Mississippian, William Faulkner was a prolific writer who explored unique styles and literary devices. As stated previously, he set most of his literary genuine creations in Yoknapatawpha County, which has become one of the prominent imaginary places in literature. Starting with "*Sartoris*" in 1929 and ending with "*The Reivers*" in 1962. Relying on his background and step by step, Faulkner unveiled so much regarding the people, the history and the geography of Yoknapatawpha with such unity that it seems to be, for many readers, a real county. Robert Penn Warren has noticed that geography is "scrupulously though effortlessly presented in Faulkner's work", and "its significance for his work is very great"¹

It is an established fact that Faulkner's prominence has resulted in a voluminous outflowing of criticism, yet none of which has been displayed by geographers despite a growing sense of awareness that fiction profoundly influences the images that people hold regarding places. Although many scholars have addressed geographical themes in Faulkner's works, including space, place and region, rarely has a geographer entered the fray. As such, it seems incredible that no geographer until now has given this subject a substantive treatment. To this end, it is of utmost importance to state that the lack of criticism on Faulkner's works by geographers has not resulted in a lack of geographical evaluation.

¹ Robert Penn Warren. William Faulkner. Three Decades of Criticism. Michigan State University Press. USA. 1960. p 110.

Geographer's Aiken Charles ' *William Faulkner and the Southern Landscape (2009)* is an in-depth study of the parallels and divergences of the north Mississippi of William Faulkner's fiction and its real world geographical equivalent . Aiken brings an experienced geographer's eye and a literary critic's sensibility to Faulkner's South and , in doing so , he achieves a work of great insight and creative passion . Early in Faulkner's career , Oxford , Mississippi , the seat of Lafayette County became the creative blueprint reinforcing his fictional Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County . In this book , Aiken asserts that much previous geographical and literary analysis had formerly concluded that : Faulkner looked upon and presented Yoknapatawpha as the South in miniature ."¹ Based on a detailed reading and analysis both of that Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County are situated in the complex social and geographical space between both the " Upland and Lowland Souths and ...the rural and urban Souths."² Indeed , Faulkner himself stated in the following noteworthy words:

The primary job of any writer faces is to tell you a story , a story out of human experience – I mean by that universal mutual experience , the anguishes and troubles and griefs of the human heart , which is universal , without regard to race or time or conditions ...I think that no writer's got time to be drawing a picture of a region .³

Aiken smartly concludes that Faulkner's Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County are not merely representations of a complete South , reduced in all its complexity to a single town and its surrounding county . Instead , Faulkner created a place in which he could use his literature " to tell universal stories solidly and deeply grounded in the unique cultural and historical geography of this place ."⁴ As a further matter , Aiken summarizes what he concludes are Faulkner's geographical legacies : that Faulkner was one of the best writers to base fictional stories in real places that he had a keen ability to read and describe the natural landscape of a place – and an ability to interpret the destruction of precisely those natural landscapes – and that he had an unparalleled ability to capture cultural landscapes complete

¹ Charles S , Aiken , Athens . *William Faulkner and the Southern Landscape* . University of Georgia Press . Georgia . 2009 . p 37

² Ibid , 38

³ Faulkner quoted in Aiken , p 55

⁴ Ibid , 43

with “vivid descriptions of people, places, objects and actions that have vanished.”¹ In essence, given the writer’s literary stature as one of the audacious twentieth century American writers, certainly there is space for geographical-literary analysis of his body of work which is of special interest to geographers and critics as well due to the centrality of place in Faulkner’s writing.

Although it is a fictitious place inhabited by fictional persons, Faulkner integrates it into a geographical setting that includes prominent actual places. In a like manner, many critics have approached Faulkner’s fiction comparing his stories to the landscapes and history of Mississippi, in general, and Lafayette County in particular. But, it is Faulkner’s magic ability, as an innovative writer, to convert the local geography of his birthplace into a fictional world. The philosophers of narrative call the similarity between the actual world and fictional world “anchoring”. Wolterstorff employs the term “anchoring” to give explanation that actual entities are the foundations of fictional world’s establishment. A thoughtful clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Lubomir Dolezel thusly:

The actual world participates in the formation of fictional worlds by providing models of its structure (including the author’s experience), by anchoring the fictional story to a historical event... In these information-transfers, the actual-world “material” enters the structuring of fictional worlds.²

For many decades, literary critics have produced much genre, investigating the parallels between fictional Yoknapatawpha and real Lafayette County, i.e.: Faulkner’s homeland. Additionally, powerful parallels exist between the history of Lafayette county and that of Yoknapatawpha County: Removal of the Indians, settlement, the Civil War, the poverty that pervaded the post-war era were all omnipresent in Faulkner’s body of fiction. On the other hand, geographical parallels between the real and the mythical are wondrous. A close examination of Faulkner’s simple maps of his fictitious kingdom: The Yoknapatawpha County as drawn in his 1936 novel *Absalom Absalom!* and in his collection of literary creations *The Portable Faulkner* produced in 1945 reveals very tiny dissimilarities. But even

¹ Ibid, 224

² Lubomir Dolezel. *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds*. Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press. 1998, p 485

to the casual observer, comparison of the map of Yoknapatawpha with that of Lafayette county reveals some obvious resemblance and striking similarities.

Like Lafayette, Yoknapatawpha County is a rectangular county. As shown previously, it is “drained in the north by the Tallahatchie and by the Yoknapatawpha in the South”.¹ Jefferson, like Oxford is located on a split, which is designated by Faulkner as ‘Pine Hills’, placed between the two streams. In addition to this, even roads in Yoknapatawpha County seem to resemble those of Lafayette County. By way of illustration, roads radiate from Jefferson in all principal directions except southeast, as they do from Oxford. Sartoris’s railroad running north toward Memphis Junction and south toward Mottstown crosses Yoknapatawpha County, passing through the western portion of Jefferson, as the Illinois Central Gulf Lafayette County, passing through the western portion of Oxford.

Correspondingly, it is quite obvious that throughout Faulkner’s fiction, he leaves no doubt as to the exact location of Yoknapatawpha County. Again and like Lafayette, it is located in the loess region of northwestern Mississippi east of the Yazoo Delta and approximately eighty miles south of Memphis.² *Intruder in the Dust* provides some vivid and genuine descriptions of the small-scale geographical context of the county, where from a vantage point at the eastern edge of Yoknapatawpha, Charles Mallison sees:

His whole native land, his home ... unfolding beneath him like a map in one slow soundless explosion: to the east ridge on green ridge tumbling away toward Alabama and to the west and south the checkered fields and the woods flowing on into the blue and gauzed horizon beyond which lay at last like a cloud the long wall of the levee and the great River itself flowing not merely from the north but out of the North.³

Even though Faulkner never published a detailed map of Jefferson, yet several similarities between the fictitious town and Oxford are readily identifiable. Jefferson’s

¹ The World of William Faulkner, is Oxford the Original of Jefferson in William Faulkner’s Novels. Author: Ward L. Miner. Pageant Book Co, New York, 1959. Vol, 76, pp 447

² Ibid, 454

³ William Faulkner. *Intruder in the Dust*. Paperback, Vintage Classics. USA. 1996 (it was first published in 1948) p 145

principal black district is Freedmantown , and a smaller black settlement , the Hollow is at the margin of the town . The pre-eminent white churches are Episcopalian , Baptist and Methodist. The resemblances between individual components continue , yet what is important to note is that lengthy descriptions place many components in proper relationship to one another .

As Calvin Brown , a boyhood friend of Faulkner noticed that “ Faulkner habitually imagines his characters moving about the square and streets of Oxford and the roads , hills , and swamps of Lafayette County .” and “ it follows that anyone who knows the town and the country well will frequently recognize these settings.”¹ In *Sartoris* , Horace Benbow returning from World War I , left Jefferson’s railroad station, passed by the town tower plant through a residential section and then the “ hill flattened away into the plateau on which the town proper had been built ... and the street became definitely urban presently with garages and small shops ”² In this fictional instance , Faulkner provides an accurate representation of a traverse along Oxford’s Second Depot , which now has become Buren Avenue , from the depot to the Lafayette County Courthouse .

It is of essence to note that the courthouse square was a significant blueprint of various fictitious instances painted in Faulkner’s literary creations . Towns across the South have courthouse squares that are similar , yet Faulkner’s rendition of the Jefferson’s square details are essentially the details of Oxford’s even to the Confederate monument . To cite another powerful genuine resemblance , the fictional jail in Yoknapatawpha County , like the actual one , is one block from the courthouse , which resembles a residence much more than a place of custody . In order to make it much more manifest , the following figure is presented .

¹ Calvin S . Brown . *Faulkner’s Geography and Topography* , *ibid* , Vol , 78 , 1962 , pp 652-659.

² *Ibid* , 656 .

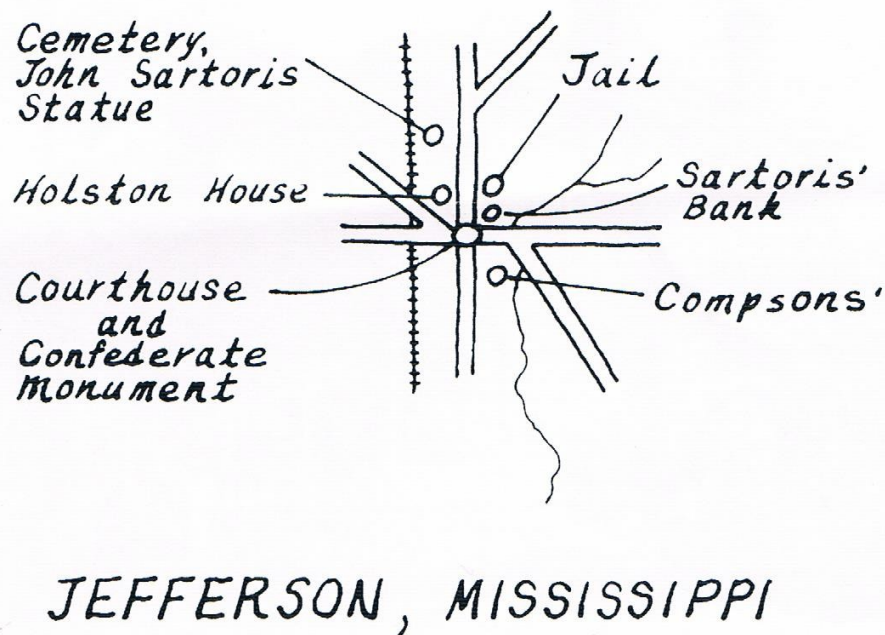


Fig . 2 . A sketch map of Jefferson , Mississippi developed by Faulkner's map in *Absalom Absalom!*

Another powerful matching between the real Lafayette County and Faulkner's fictive space is that both counties have the richer soil in the north-west and the poorer soil in the south-east . A deeper inspection and examination of the people inhabiting Yoknapatawpha County reveal that the soils of the fictional county are quite similar to that of Lafayette County . Indeed , in Yoknapatawpha , the poorer south-east area is also called the Pine Hills area , which is demonstrated by Faulkner as Frenchman's Bend where the Snopes family lives.

On a deeper inspection , it is noteworthy to state that in an article written by Charles S Aiken , he demonstrates a hand-drawn sketch of Faulkner's fictional kingdom drawn by Faulkner himself . The sketch is a genuine epitome that exemplifies for readers that Yoknapatawpha County is located in the same spot as Oxford in Lafayette County . Correspondingly , Oxford is portrayed as a town itself in Faulkner's fictive space , pointing at the fact that Faulkner has removed Oxford from its real life location in Lafayette and put Jefferson in its stead .

Chapter Two: Locating the Stage

It is worthy of note to state that due to the changes and the shifting happened to the actual places and locations, Faulkner omits some prominent places of Lafayette County and does not include them in his fictive space. They consist of places such as the University of Mississippi, Sardis Lake and many other essential places. Since this study is not of a geographical sort that has to trace and highlight every single geographical component, the emphasis will be given to only these two places, for they are reckoned as vital in the life of the author. The university of Mississippi is excluded from Jefferson, though it is a vital part in the city of Oxford. It is not replaced by another university or got even a different name. In his life, William Faulkner enjoys boating and fishing on the lake of Sardis. The Sardis Lake is a very pertinent component in the geographical nature of the Lafayette County and with the people of the county. The University of Mississippi and the Sardis Lake do not have their counterparts in the Yoknapatawpha County of William Faulkner.

In the same spirit, Yoknapatawpha County appears to resemble R.K. Narayan's¹ fictional setting Malgudi, whose fiction is enormously popular in India, he made a fantastic use of his birthplace as a genuine source to explore the pleasures and the sorrows of his characters. As a further matter, Malgudi is an imaginary fictional town round which Narayan has delineated the complex patterns of the lives of his characters; whereby readers are invited to take a literary journey to this mythical land, to sympathize, laugh and share the vicissitudes of its inhabitants. In fact, this imaginary setting came to Narayan's mind instantly, he validates this point convincingly through the following expressive words:

I remember waking up with the name Malgudi on Vijayadashami, the day on which the goodness of learning is celebrated. Malgudi was a shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Malgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station, which was a small platform with a banayan tree, a station master, and two trains a day, one coming and one going. On Vijayadashami, I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: 'the train had just arrived at Malgudi station.'²

¹ Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswami, or simply R. K. Narayan is one of the most celebrated Indian novelists writing in English. Most of his literary creations are set in the fictional South Indian Malgudi. His fiction captures the essence of ordinary life.

² Hatri, Chote Lal, R.K. Narayan: Reflections and Re-evaluating. Sarop and Sons. New Delhi. 2006. P 21

In point of fact , Malgudi has no geographical existence on any map of India . As a fruit of Narayan's marvellous imagination , it lies in the reader's imagination more distinctly than any other region portrayed by any Indian writer . As Malgudi seems to be a reality quite filled with all that is intimate and poignant in human life .

Some of Malgudi pre-eminent landmarks such as Malgudi station , The Central Co-operative Bank , Kabir Street , Lowley Extension , the Royal Hair-Cutting Saloon , Sir Fredrick Lowley Statue , Hotels , Cinemas , The Saray River are vividly omnipresent in Narayan's body of fiction . Moreover , it is of utmost significance and great importance to state that Malgudi is not a fixed town instead it embraces different changes through a passage of time . Even Narayan's successful selection of characters pass through several stages of development and so do Malgudi . In some novels , it is depicted as neither a village nor a city , yet in the successive novels Malgudi grows in space and time . Walsh William endorses this idea as follows :

It has grown from the small sized agricultural town to a semi industrialized city . The Malgudi of *Swami and Friends* is not the same as the Malgudi of *The Vendor of Sweets* . Even in the same novel , in *The Guide* , we see it passing through various phases of development . Speaking from a topographical point of view , the Albert Mission College headed by Principal Brown , the Central Co-operative land mortgage bank with its imposing structure , the newly-built bungalows in the lawly Extension , Englandia Banking Corporation , The Sunrise Pictures , all speak emphatically of the story of the growth of the town .¹

It is Narayan's merit and talent as an artist that make his writing so impactful . Indeed, since his characters are deeply rooted in Indian landscapes and his powerful rendition

¹ Walsh William . R.K Narayan . Allied Publishers . New Delhi .2005. p 34

of the events , he endorses within his readers a deep sense of place , as if Malgudi is a real place . It is so implemented in the readers ‘ imagination that they wonder whom they are going to meet in this town , “ The streets and the lanes appear to be as familiar as one’s home town .”¹

But more important is the fact that Narayan crystallizes Malgudi with much vividness and accuracy as a microcosm of India . However , Faulkner portrays Yoknapatawpha County as a microcosm of the American South . Malgudi is located in India ; whereas , Yoknapatawpha County is located in the US South . Last but not least , the portrayal of life as it is was one of Narayan’s principal objectives and it is adequate for the setting of Malgudi. But Narayan’s fictional setting “ Malgudi ” is not a mere geographical expression , indeed it has some attributes of its own . Even some contemporary Indian critics consider “ Malgudi ” as the real hero of Narayan’s novels . Therefore , what needs to be said is that Narayan is at his best giving his fictional setting of Malgudi a reality of his own .

3. Reasons For the Creation of William Faulkner’s Fictional World

Searching for the source materials that are utilized in the creation of a fictional world that a text embodies in a useful way to enter , understand and appreciate the text. It is plainly evident that most of Faulkner’s literary productions are set in Faulkner’s fictional world he invented and modeled after his hometown Lafayette County . Don Harrison Doyle asserts that “ names of people , events , places and countless little details that emerged from

¹ Mukhrejee , N.K . Indian Writing in English . Sterling Publishers Put , Ltd. New Delhi .2002 p 78

the historical record of Lafayette County began to blur with what I was learning about the fictional Yoknapatawpha County”¹

In the same strain , it is quite essential to bring to the surface a jumbled array of fundamental elements that were at the origin of Faulkner’s creation of his fictive space and hastened its blossoming . In pursuit of this aim , a careful attention will be paid to a complex net of historical , cultural , race , class and gender relations which have been the basis of Faulkner’s South .

3.1. History

William Faulkner’s literary works were produced during the time period when Southern intellectuals , unlike their northern counterparts , possessed a very powerful regional awareness of the US South as their innovative refuge . The reasons for such a discrepancy within the same country can be looked for in the history of the American South , as being a distinct American region . After the heavy defeat in the Civil War , the US South was left behind , it lived on the margin of history . Indeed , the US South remained aside and painfully aware of its isolated status within the country . Being distinct and isolated from the center of the country mean that this particular portion of the US possessed various major social and cultural values. Irving Howe endorses this idea in the following noteworthy words :

The American South gave its writers a generous and often obsessive sense of the past . The rest of the country might be committed to commercial expansion or addicted to the notion of progressive optimism , but the South, even if it cared to , was unable these dominant American values , it had been left behind ... it was this crucial advantage of distance , this perspective from the social rear that was the major dispensation the South could offer its writers . And , it gave them something else : a compact and inescapable object.²

¹ Doyle Don . Faulkner’s County . The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha .The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill , North Carolina . 2001, p 08

² Irving Howe .William Faulkner : A Critical Study . The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London . 1975 , p 357-358

It is commonplace to state that Faulkner as a native Mississippian could not escape the influence of his birthplace. As a matter of fact, Faulkner was heavily influenced by the US South, its history and the impact of that history on Southern present. The American South gave him something else: a hope of universal deliverance, and a source of inexhaustible literary inspiration. What establishes the validity of this point are Faulkner's words 'I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about'. Driven by such an impulse, he created a world that is very often described as "a keystone in the universe; that small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away the universe itself would collapse"¹. What is important to cast light on is that the method Faulkner employed to create his keystone in the universe was never a historical one; instead, he "talked to people"². Malcolm Cowley provides a thoughtful clarification for this subject matter as follows:

The pattern was based on what he saw in Oxford or remembered from his childhood, on scraps of family tradition, on kitchen dialogues between the black cook and her amiable husband, on Saturday-afternoon gossip in Courthouse Square, on stories told by men in overalls squatting on their heels while they passed around a fruit jar of white corn liquor; on all the sources familiar to a small-town Mississippi boy – but the whole of it was elaborated, transformed, given conclusive life by his emotions; until by simple intensity of feeling the figures in it became a little more than human, became heroic or diabolical, became symbols of the old South, of war and reconstruction, of commerce and machinery destroying the standards of the past.³

By relying heavily and tremendously on local or personal experience as a creative impetus, Faulkner succeeded to create the picture of his South which in its distinctiveness and complexity did not diverge much from the real model. But, although Faulkner's South, according to C. Vann Woodward:

¹ Stein, J. William Faulkner: An Interview in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, eds. 1963, p 82

² Cantwell, R. "The Faulkners: Recollections of a Gifted Family" eds. A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1963, p 57

³ Cowley, M. A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation. Viking Press. New York. 1980 p131

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represents the supreme creation of the Southern renaissance, it is not history in any usual sense. And it is not unlikely that the Faulkner critics have gone astray in thinking of the Yoknapatawpha novels as Southern history in microcosm, or as representing any consistent ideas or theories about Southern history. In the universality of their meaning they are more, and in their immediate application less than that.¹

As a further matter, Faulkner in creating the Yoknapatawpha saga² is conscious about the Southern history. Lewis P. Simpson states that the Southern history has an intimate presence in Faulkner's memory, so that he may connect it with the modern history of the American Civil War and "of the South as the place where much of this war had been fought"³. Indeed, Faulkner had a genuine and personal connection with people who "had not only survived its (The Civil War) battles but were living with embodiments and the drama of surviving the long and bitter aftermath of the defeat and the reconstruction"⁴

In the same spirit write Richard Gray in *A History of American Literature* that Faulkner's novels are an attempt to voice the South and the Southerners "his novels constitute an imaginative recovery of the South, an attempt to know it as a region. Those novels not only tell; however they show"⁵ However, Faulkner is firmly aware of the historical facts that are not fully known. Brooks argues that history is a mystery and the only way that helps understand it is through imagination and speculation. According to him, "history is really a kind of imaginative construction"⁶ of reality, lived and experienced. In addition to this, Brooks asserts that "the past always remains at some level a mystery, but if we are to hope to understand it in any way, we must enter into it and project ourselves imaginatively into the attitudes and emotions of the historical figures"⁷

By the same token, it can be argued that the fictional world of William Faulkner's novels meshes vividly with the historical source. Dealing with his characters, he can not

¹ C. Vann Woodward. *The Burden of Southern History*. Vintage Books. New York. 1960, p 34

² Faulkner's novels are collectively called the Yoknapatawpha Saga. Though *Sartoris* is the first novel of the saga, Yoknapatawpha is first identified by its name in *As I Lay Dying*.

³ Simpson, Lewis P. *Imagining Our Time: Recollections and Reflections on American Writing*. USA. LSU Press. 2007, 181

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Richard Gray. *A History of American Literature*. Blackwell Publishers. Ltd. USA. 2012, p 416

⁶ Brooks Cleanth. *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County*. Yale University Press. 1963, p 311

⁷ Ibid, 312

stop telling the readers about the history of each character , if not in one novel , it will be in another . Since he is obsessed with the past , his characters are immersed in it . Investigating Michel Foucault's view on history , Downing concludes that all forms of knowledge are “ historically relative and contingent , and can not be dissociated from the workings of power”¹

Moreover , Faulkner's mastery of the use of the stream of consciousness technique is very effective in exposing such elements to readers . The fictional kingdom of Yoknapatawpha County is a world where “ the past is never dead . It is not even past ”. Malcolm Cowley asserts that “ Yoknapatawpha County is a region where every landmark has a story of its own , and every story goes back to earlier times”² Correspondingly , it has been acknowledged by many researchers that Faulkner's fictional world of Yoknapatawpha is highly considered to be one of the primary sources of the Southern history . Differently said , Lee Anne Fennell affirms that Faulkner pulls “ pieces of the past into the present , resurrects the dead , and re-makes family history”³ Doyle admires Faulkner “ not only as a writer but also as a historian- an interpreter of the past”⁴

Tracing the history of the South , Doyle refers to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha saga as one of the crucial references . He considers Yoknapatawpha as a thoughtful representation of Lafayette County . In his historical examination of the South , Doyle depends largely on comparing a fictional character with an actual character , a fictional place with an actual place , and a fictional event with an actual event . Doyle utilizes an approach based on an assumption that literature is nothing but a fruitful reflection of reality , though his study is purely a historical one . This study seems to be not only thoughtful but mainly useful in the sense that it provides researchers with the chronicle of real events in Mississippi and bounds these events with Yoknapatawpha novels .

Solidly rooted in the South , Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels and short stories cling to the well-known model of Southern history consisting of three main phases . In his paper ,

¹ Downing , L . The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge .2008 , vii .

² Malcolm Cowley . The Faulkner-Cowley File Letters and Memories , 1994-1962 , New York , Penguin. 1978 , xxxiii .

³ Lee Fennell Anne . “ Memory and Determinism in Faulkner.” The Southern Literary Journal , Vol , 31 , No . 2(Spring 1999) : 35-49 JSTOR

⁴ Ibid , xiii

Faulkner's History : Sources and Interpretation, Don H. Doyle displays this historical process as :

A three act morality that portrays , first , the Old South dominated by the honourable but flawed slave master aristocracy , then the crisis of Civil War and Reconstruction , which destroys the foundation of the old ruling class , followed by the New South , which witnesses the rise of a new calculating class of urban entrepreneurs.¹

As Faulkner's fiction shows , he does not consider given historical data , yet the basic construction of the three-turning points , widely perceived as rise-fall-Reconstruction , is quite apparent in his novels . It is of essence to note that Faulkner's view of the Old South does not centre , even though he did feel nostalgia for it but he did not idealize the plantation myth or the plantation aristocracy . Instead , he believed wholeheartedly in the Old South's moral order , based on “ a code of personal dignity , courage , honor and integrity”² which according to Faulkner , had to be freed of rigid formalism , unnecessary violence , and sins of slavery .

The second key phase in the temporal development of Faulkner's American South , which could be basically defined in terms of fall is demonstrated by the Civil War and Reconstruction . To this end , it could be argued that :

In the author's canon the Southern struggle from 1861 to 1865 is the major turning point , forming the watershed between the Old South of the planter-aristocrats – the Sartorises , Sutpens and Comsons – and the postbellum South dominated by the Snopeses and Popeyes³

As a matter of fact , Faulkner's portrayal of the Civil War is a response to both the Southern military defeat and the destruction of principles that formed the very being of antebellum Southern society . Moreover , Faulkner was also aware of the fact that the war

¹ Doyle Don . H. Faulkner's History : Sources and Interpretation in Faulkner in Context : Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha , eds. Donald M . Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie p 07. Jackson University Press of Mississippi . 1997 , p 07

² David Miller . Faulkner and the Civil War Myth and Reality , American Quarterly. 1963 , p 204

³Ibid

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caused the instability of labor market , cut off financial and food resources and destroyed the economy and traffic system . The fictional representations of his Civil War exemplify tremendously this situation : Jefferson was burned down during the war , the vast majority of the surrounding plantations , including Sartoris ' were destroyed and those that succeeded to survive had to cope with the lack of money , food and labour , with an exhausted land .

A thoughtful examination of Faulkner's masterpiece *Absalom Absalom !* reveals that Faulkner approached the Civil War from a different perspective . Faulkner relied heavily on the self created characters and historical data as well . To explore this matter , Faulkner's great grandfather Colonel William C. Falkner was the model for the characters of Colonel John Sartoris . Faulkner's vivid delineations of the Civil War are not exaggerated . They are a genuine response to not only the military defeat but mainly to the destruction of moral values and conducts that used to form the backbone of the Southern society .

In the same strain , Faulkner contributes to the creation of the southern Civil War . history in more than one way , he exemplified it not only from men warriors' perspective , yet women who were left at the home-front did not go astray . Again his novel *Absalom Absalom !* mirrors masterfully the Civil War era from a home-front point of view . To cite this situation , the following fictional representation depicts what has been stated .

Judith Sutpen joined the other women - there were wounded in Jefferson then - in the improvised hospital where (...) they cleaned and dressed the self-fouled bodies of strange injured and dead and made lint of the window curtains and sheets and linen of the houses in which they had been born ; there were none to ask her about brother and sweetheart , while they talked among themselves of sons and brothers and husbands with tears and grief perhaps , but at least with certainty , knowledge .¹

As a further matter , the Civil War era was followed by Reconstruction , a decade dominated by the feelings of Southern military , economic and political defeat , the American South , as the loser in the war , was facing weighty economic and political failure .

¹ William Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom !* , p 125-126

Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha went through the same experience. The war left undeniable and heavy traces on Thomas Sutpen's and General Compson's plantations. The former did not manage to rebuild his plantation and was forced to open a shop to survive. Once more Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom!* portrays this matter as follows: "He (Thomas Sutpen) used to spend many hours there, curs [ing] the store empty customers"¹ who were as poor as the land during and after the war. General Compson, on the other hand, "put the first mortgage on the still intact square mile to a New England carpet-bagger in '66'"²

In essence, Reconstruction appears to be the most problematic problem in Faulkner's oeuvre, there are not so many characters and events depicting it: only the Bundrens – grandfather and grandson both named Calvin, "killed ... over a question of negro voting"³ In a similar vein, Doyle argues that Reconstruction remained the one period in Southern history he avoided and seemed unable or unwilling to address. A genuine clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Doyle in his following words:

It (Reconstruction) was more than just the creative problems of plot or character; it was the subject, the history, and all that it meant for what the South was that made Reconstruction so difficult – especially for the probing and sometimes heretical mind of William Faulkner – to reassess.⁴

The third phase in the historical development of Faulkner's South is marked by the New South when owing to rapid urbanization and industrialization inspired by the belief that the past should be forgotten and much attention should be paid to the economic development rather than political and race tensions. Therefore, Faulkner's New South became home for a class in evolution including lawyers, judges, bankers and shop owners, and a refuge for white and black sharecroppers who did not get used so well to the new situation.

3.2. Family

¹ Ibid, 183

² Cowley Malcolm. *The Portable Faulkner*. Penguin. New York, 1977, p 708.

³ Faulkner's *Light in August*, p 187

⁴ Ibid, 27

Every creative writer is the product of his circumstances , family , atmosphere , society and cultural inheritance . As a son , a writer and a member of the South , Faulkner was the product of his time and place , the Mississippi of his birth and heritage . Faulkner could not resist the weighty influence of his birthplace . He was tremendously influenced by traditional Southern values and conducts of family and community . Family has been the cradle of Southern culture and southern values , the mirror image of Southern society at large . Indeed , it has offered Southern writers an inexhaustible source of inspiration . As a Southerner, William Faulkner was practically consumed by the family continuum so typical for the region where he was born and raised . It is not surprising that family played an outsized role in both his life and his writing .

According to his biographer Joseph Blotner , Faulkner was convinced that character came out of family ... environment was important too , he granted , but it was mostly a matter of genetics ... He (Faulkner) also used what would later be called the South's concept of the " extended family"¹ Born a native Mississippian in a branched family that had been prominent in the area for three generations , he grew up in the shadow of the family's formidable history, which as Donald Kartiganer asserts sets the stage for Faulkner's conflict between the need to remember and honor the past and the need to create for himself a distinctive identity . Faulkner was also a very attentive listener , as Kartiganer suggests :

At his father's livery stable or the family's hunting cabin (...) [he was] listening to the tales of the old times and people . He could hear stories of the Civil War from men who had fought in it (...) as well as from those whose words were their only weapons : the old aunts , the women , the indomitable , the undefeated , who never surrendered.²

¹ Blotner Joseph . Faulkner : A Biography . Quality Paperback Book Club. New York . 1974 , p 197

² Kartiganer Donald M . " William Faulkner" , Columbia Literary History of The United States , Ed , Emory Eliot. Columbia University Press. New York . 1988 , p 890

Joseph Skvorecky endorses this point, asserting that all these cousins, uncles and aunts were “proud Southerners, storytellers of tales and stories, they all enriched William Faulkner’s talent”¹ By the same token, the story of Faulkner’s South is eventually a story about generations of families of different race and class origin that are deeply grounded in a particular Southern community packed with its typical problems, virtues and particularities. In utilizing such narrative structure, Faulkner followed the well-known pattern of genealogical novel which places one or more families in time and space and elucidates their origin, growth and fall.

Undoubtedly, the Southern family left a great influence on Faulkner’s writing style. Indeed, family as a crucial social unit is the key stone in Faulkner’s world. Correspondingly, the traditional system of family, values, pride, and legacy of glorious past are the main motives that determine actions and behaviours of most of Faulkner’s selection of characters. Each of Faulkner’s family is usually presented in four different stages that could according to Olga W. Vickery in her paper *The Contours of Time*, be referred to as “elemental being, doing, thinking and remembering”²

The first stage, that of simple and natural living, described the life of a family, or at least some of its members in colonial wilderness and their attempts to cultivate it. The ground for the second stage was prepared due to cultivation and civilization of land. Plantations were built and dynasties were established. The third stage is broadly considered as a stage of thinking. It was characterized by distancing from action and dominion and by withdrawal in thoughts. This generation was firmly interested in abstractions and universal principles of tradition that they had inherited.

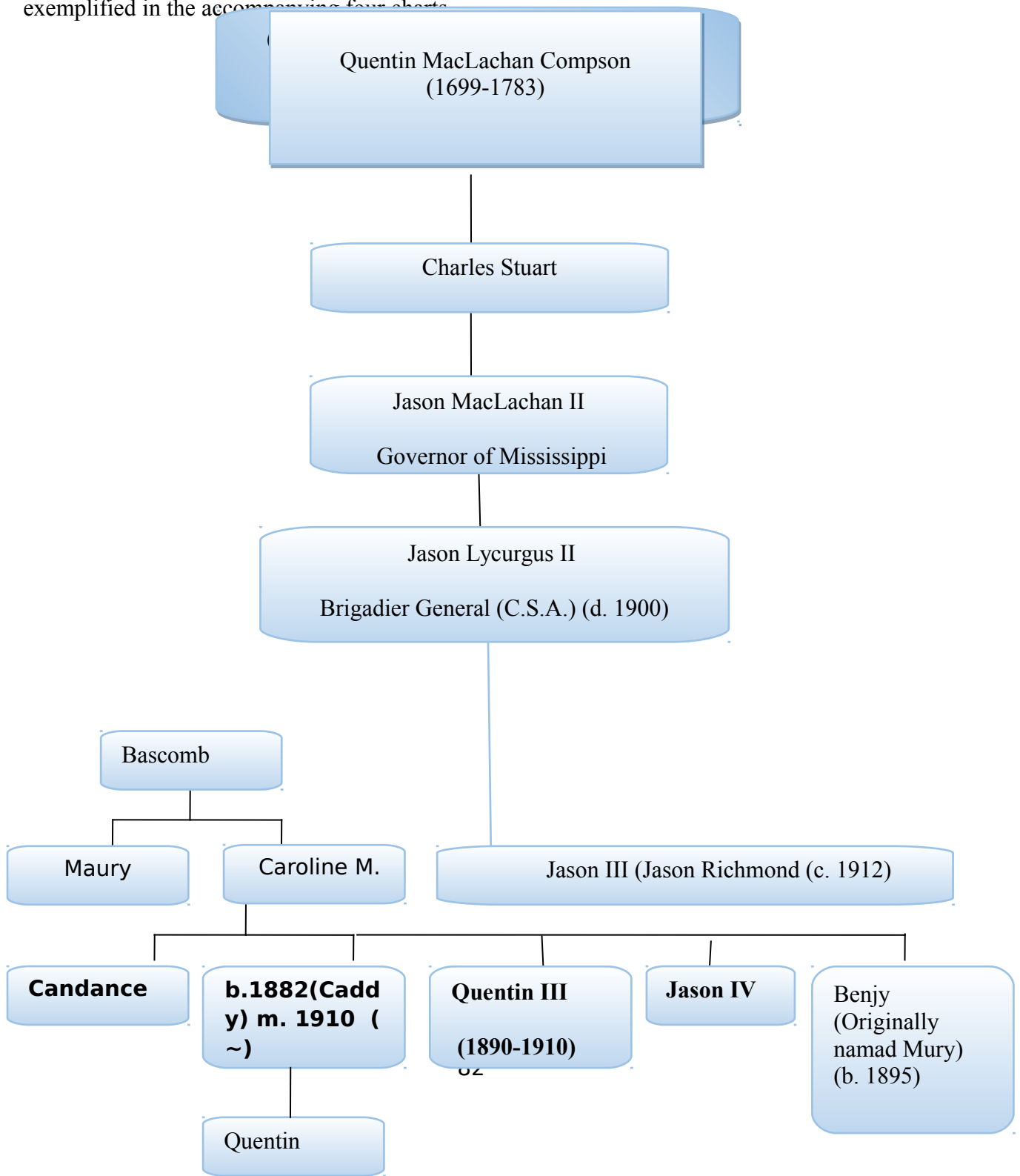
The last stage, finally, was referred to as a stage of remembering. The majority of families, in this stage, denoted the end or destruction of family as a traditional institution. This pattern of behaviour or mode of thinking is masterfully pervasive in most, or at least some of Faulkner’s families including the Sartoris, the Compsons, the Sutpens, the McCaslins, the Snopeses and the Bundrens.

¹ Skvorecky Joseph. A Story from the Myth of Yoknapatawpha County, Eds Martin Hilsky, Jan Zelenka, Prana, Odeon. 1993, p 169 – 183

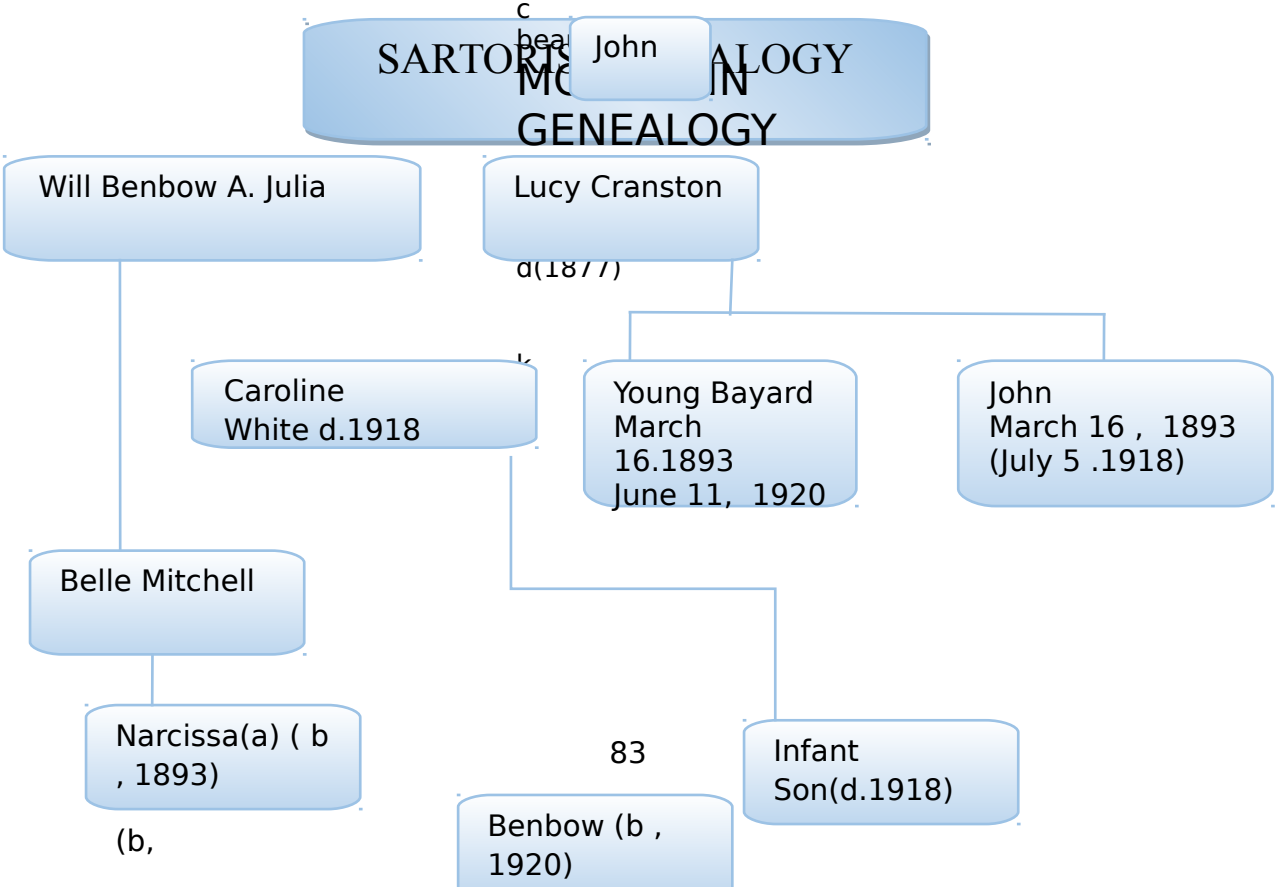
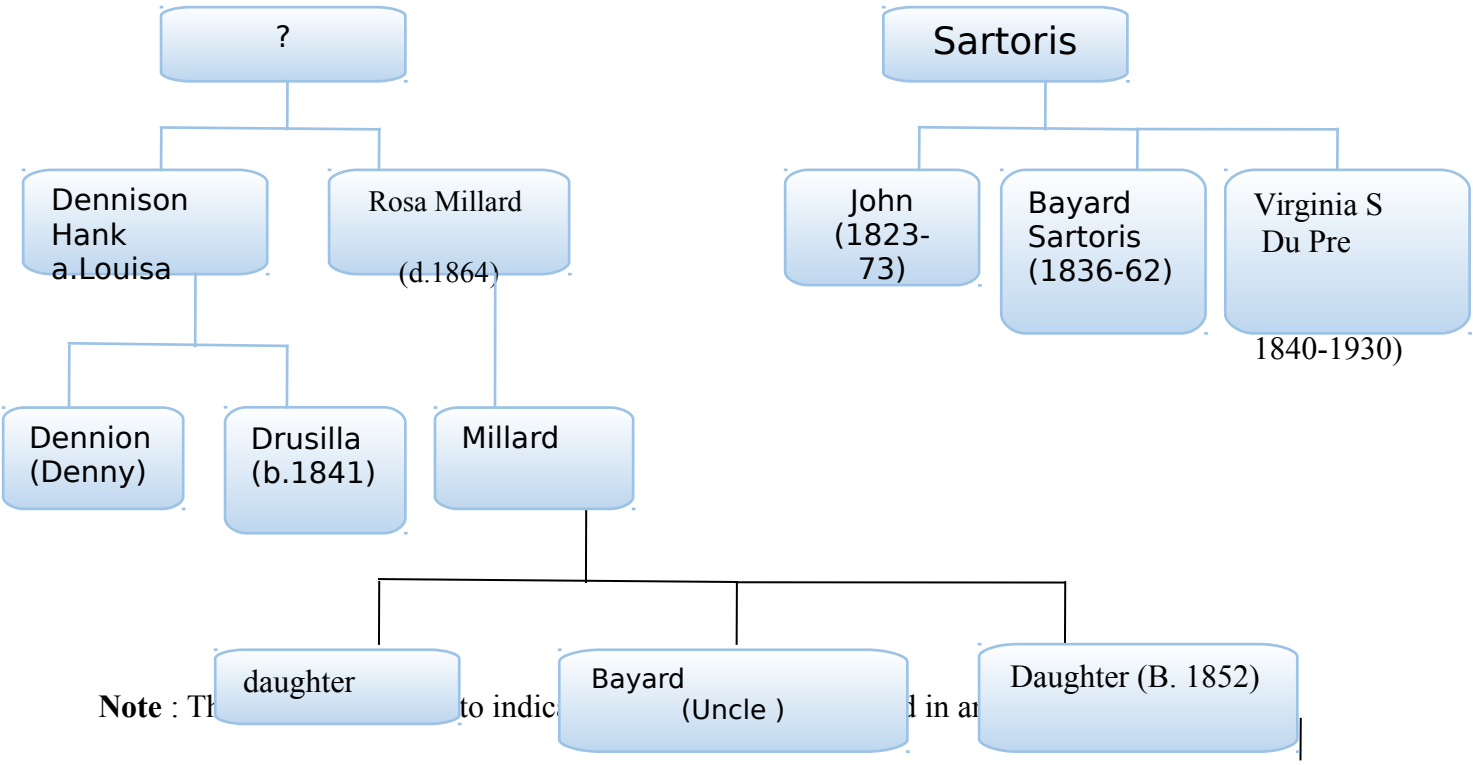
² Vickery Olga. W. The Novels of William Faulkner. A Critical Interpretation by Olga W. Vickery. Louisiana State University Press. Baton Rouge. 1986, p 261

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Moreover, two recurrent family names in Faulkner's fiction are the Sartoris family and the Snopeses, who are members of the Snopes family. These two families crystallize two divergent kinds of characters in Faulkner's mythology. Accordingly, Cleanth Brooks in his book entitled *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County* traces the genealogy of four noteworthy families in a very graphic manner as exemplified in the accompanying four charts:

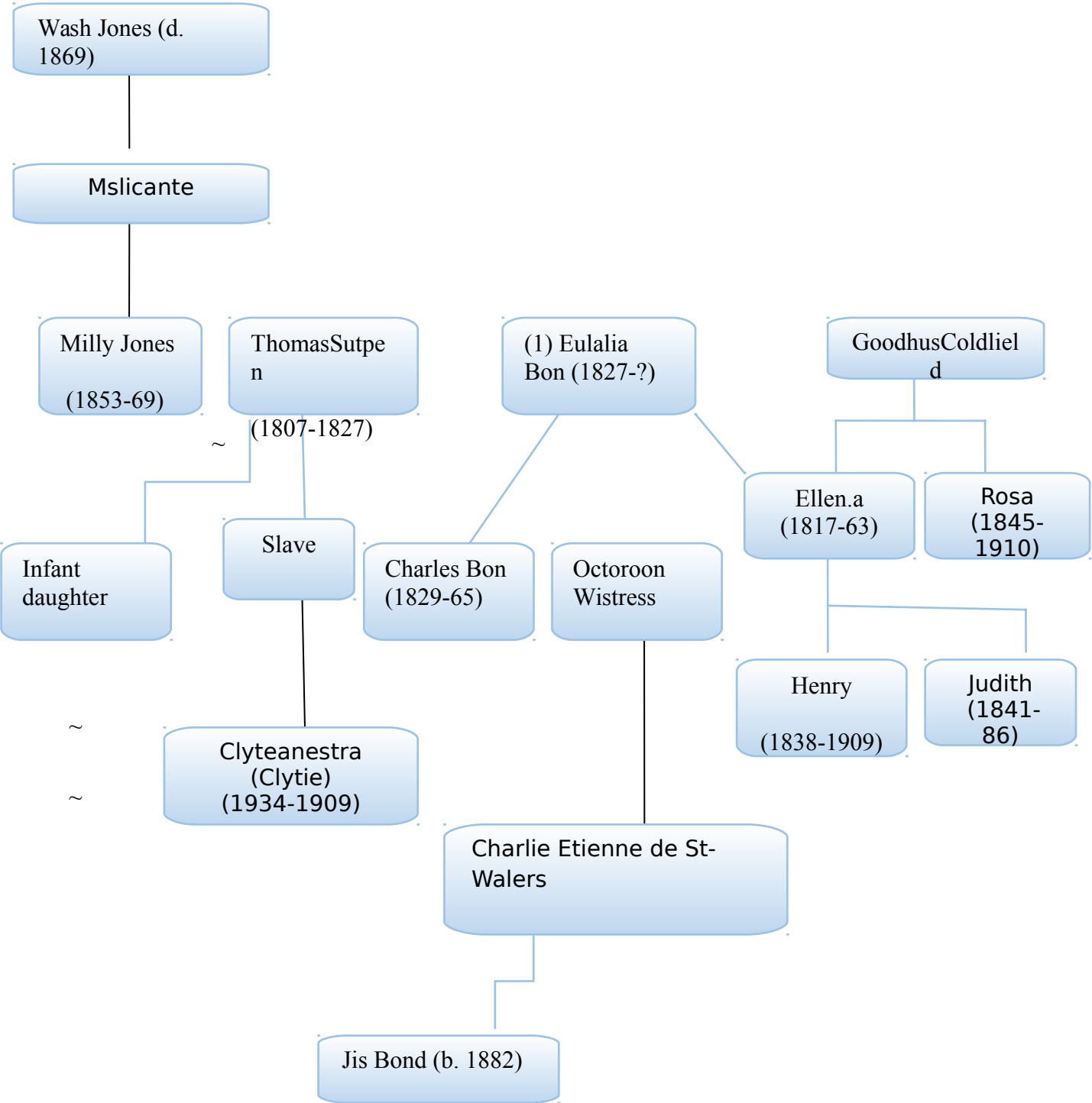


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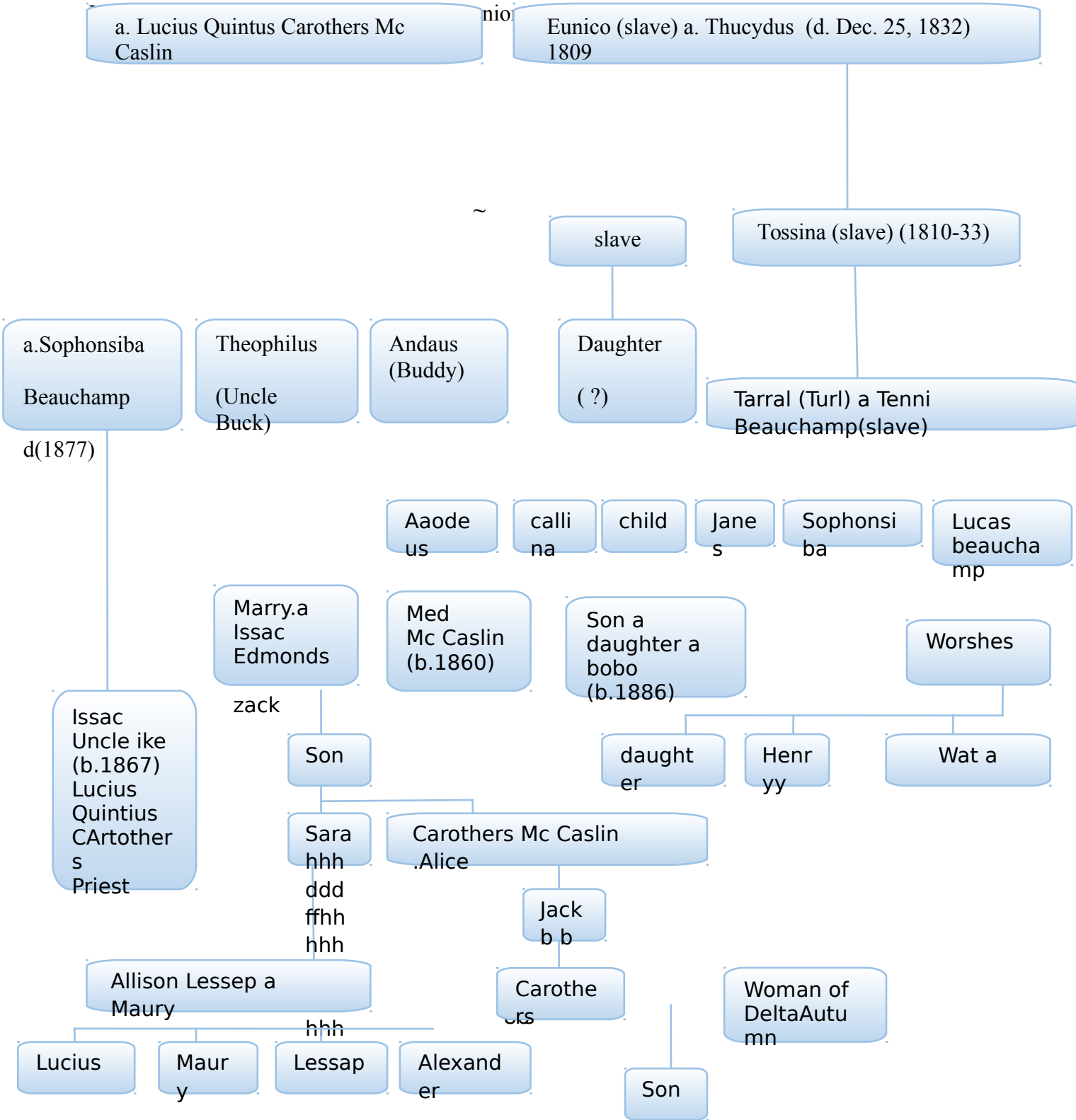
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In a like manner , Malcolm Cowley asserts that Faulkner's works are divided into a number of cycles which are about the planters , and their descendants , one about the town's people of Jefferson , one about poor whites , one about the Indians , and one about the negroes. Or again , if he adopted a division by families , there would be the Compsons –Sartoris Saga , the Snopes Saga , the McCaslin Saga , the Bundren Saga . All the cycles are closely interconnected . The Snopes and the Sartoris represent two different worlds which are in conflict with each other . The Sartoris act traditionally ; that is to say , they act within an ethically responsible will ; they stand for vital morality and humanism . The Snopeses are anti-traditional. They act only from self-interest , acknowledging no ethical duty . Thus Sartoris-Snopes conflict is fundamentally a struggle between humanism and naturalism. In *The Sound and the Fury* , Quentin Compson represents all that is left of the Sartoris tradition , yet the rest of the Compson family has either succumbed entirely to the Snopes world (Jason Compson is a good case in point) , or else have drugs to isolate them from it .

3.3 . Race

In addition to Faulkner's use of the model of history and family as an indelible social unit , considering them as powerful elements that hastened the creation of his fictional kingdom , Faulkner's body of fiction relies tremendously and is solidly grounded on some

other pertinent factors of the actual structure of the US South . One of them is the factor of race which is not considered as a biological part that determines a person's identity , but instead it is generally perceived as a social construct or product .

Faulkner's oeuvre offers a close insight into the origin , development and preservation of racist ideology in the American South . Although ambivalent , Faulkner's attitude to race could be portrayed as more tolerant , more acceptable , and more positive as compared to the one at that time exemplified the mainstream of Southern race ideology .

In point of fact , William Faulkner has been subjected to wide critical scrutiny . A significant aspect of Faulkner's criticism is the work done on his treatment of blacks , it has been the subject of much intensive critical enquiry . His concept of race was firmly based on paternalistic study of black and white race and its social-economic definition . For Blotner Joseph , Faulkner blamed undeveloped Southern economy for discrimination and bad living conditions of Southern African Americans . Faulkner found that discrimination was a dishonorable and shameful fact , as he believed widely that the freedom of speech and action should first be exercised at home. More than this , Faulkner and despite all the prejudices which he had even as a Southerner believed that “ when the white man is driven by the old inherited prejudices to do things he does ... the whole black race is laughing at him”¹

Moreover , it can be argued that Faulkner's literary work following this mode of thinking is deeply and solidly grounded upon the idea of guilt and debt . A thoughtful clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Dussere E in his influential work entitled “*The Debts of History*” *Southern Honor , Affirmative Action , and Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust* (2001) ; whereby he differentiates between several kinds of debt and this distinction is omnipresent in his fictional approach to slavery .

Indeed , he asserts that slavery and race belong to the most essential factors which shaped the United States of America . In addition to this , Dussere affirms that “ Faulkner's classic critics rightly point to the way that slavery acquires a central significance in Faulkner's fiction as the original ‘sin’ or ‘crime’ which must be expiated by contemporary white Southerners , the sin which is the source of the South's woes , its curse or doom.”²

¹ Ibid , 679

² Dussere E. “The Debts of History” *Southern Honor , Affirmative Action , and Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust* . *The Faulkner Journal* 17 (1) ; 37-57 (2001) , p 40

In a like manner, man is a social being and as such most fully identifies himself with his immediate circle, family, neighbors and nation (people). What needs to cast light on is that in the American South the determinant of race was added. Indeed, race determined a way of thinking, speaking and acting. People of uncertain origin could not be a part of a society where everyone had a well-defined place and status. In a similar vein, and from a white southerners' perspective, African Americans are perceived as being cursed by God because they are black. Dark skin color is strongly associated with 'sin'.

As stated formerly, slavery with a huge emphasis on dehumanization of a human being, was for Faulkner a curse which heavily impacted not only the land but people as well. It played an outsized role in most of his fiction as it became one of its dominant and essential motives. It is in *Absalom Absalom!* whereby Faulkner smartly and artfully examines the tragedy of curse and race, it is also a story of how race collapses Sutpen's dreams into tragedy and condemns his family in ruin. The powerful embodiment of Sutpen's misjudgement is Charles Bon, one of Faulkner's racially indeterminate characters. Bon, on the other hand, casts an inescapable shadow over Sutpen's life, as the question of race does over American society. Because Sutpen's tragedy arises from his determination to build a racial wall around his family. This is a fantasy, as Sutpen himself knows, it is America's fantasy. In Faulkner's conception, America's refusal to acknowledge that it is a diverse society in which daily life and long-term opportunities remain inextricably tied to race will lead to tragedy and destruction as surely as it reduced Sutpen's Hundred (plantation) to an overgrown wasteland.

Furthermore, *Absalom Absalom!*, according to a judgment often repeated by the writer John Juremirah Sullivan in his foreword to the 2012 *Modern Library Edition*, was the most serious attempt by a white writer to confront the problem of race in America. A genuine and fruitful fictional illustration that endorses this point is pervasive in Faulkner's novel *Go Down Moses*; where Ike McCaslin "not only the male descendent but the only and the last descendent in the male line and in the third generation"¹, repudiates the inherited land and money because he feels that "this whole South is cursed."² The curse started by the first McCaslin who sexually abused his own mulatta daughter "because she was his property ...

¹ Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*, p 256

² Ibid, 278

and because she was old enough and female ... and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was on an inferior race”¹

In pursuit of the same aim, another noteworthy fictional portrayal is seen in Faulkner’s masterpiece *Light in August* with Joanna Burden whose family was killed because they fought for the Civil Rights of Southern African Americans. Just like Ike McCaslin, Joanna “experiences the entire racial history of the US South as an inescapable curse in which we lived all white people, all other people.”² The curse takes the form of an African American “the black man who will be forever God’s chosen one because he once cursed him”³

Faulkner’s attitude towards the Southern concept of race in terms of guilt and debt displays that he did not agree with the traditional Southern race ideology. Moreover, he presented the origin, development and preservation of this ideology in his body of written art. Again, his *Absalom Absalom!* indicates thoroughly that racial intolerance was not something that was culturally passed down from one generation to another, from man to man. As an additional matter, Faulkner argues through his successful and artful creation of characters like that of Sutpen, that racism in the American South appears to be a reward given to poor whites by upper classes to lessen social injustices and inequalities. Whiteness, as an overpowering distinctive feature became a shared property of poor and rich whites which united them over the issue they could, in one way or another, make advantage. By granting poor whites freedom and the right to vote, and by giving African Americans better living conditions, the upper class deliberately created tensions in order to draw attention away from actual social and economic problems. Identification with the upper class excluded any possibility of identification with African Americans and assumed racial violence and racial intolerance as an act of both loyalty to possess race and distinction from black race.

¹ Ibid, 294

² Faulkner’s *Light in August*, p 90

³ Ibid, 191

William Faulkner's analysis of Southern concept of race does not end here . He furthers it by demonstrating that miscegenation did exist in the antebellum South . Although, it is perceived to be the most rigid sexual and racial taboo as the rumor of a drop of black blood could ruin the white Southerners' social status , miscegenation was perpetuated through a legal and non-punishable sexual abuse and exploitation of African American female slaves plantation owners who assumed to have right on . Once more , Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom!* Explores this issue genuinely . To illustrate this , Thomas Sutpen abandons his first wife , a daughter of a rich Haitian planter with whom he had a son , simply because they are partly black , so that he preserves his own plan which is to establish a dynasty of his own fully white, having no trace or drop of black blood .

3.4. Class

William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha cycle of fiction exemplifies another essential principle of every real and fictional county – a class hierarchy . As family long offered Southern writers an inexhaustible source of inspiration and mainly Faulkner who considers family as an essential unit and the main social institution , the class hierarchy , on the other hand , is present in its most elementary forms ; nevertheless , it could be differentiated among three major classes in the Yoknapatawpha Saga as the planter class , the middle class and the poor white class .

In Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha , the planter class is divided into first and foremost ' old aristocracy' : are the ancestors of few European noblemen or commoners whose origin can be traced for centuries and whose representatives are the Sartorises , and (02) new planters , the plebeians who acquired their plantations by fraud or plunder , such as Thomas Sutpen , the McCaslins and the Compsons . Deprived of the privileges given to old aristocracy and driven by an irrepressible desire to obtain things representing the core of social success in the Old South -land , slaves , house , and a respectable wife - they were obliged to use violence massive cruelty and craft to acquire their plantations , cultivate them in Southern wilderness , and establish their dynasties . Their brutal nature and ruthless conduct helped in the creation and preservation of the Southern value system they made the institution of slavery a reality . Morality and humanity were , in such a design , of little importance .

Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha is also inhabited by representatives of the middle class . The majority of them are wealthy middle class men including Will Vanner , a wealthy shop owner ; lawyers such as Gavin Stevens and Horace Benbow ; V.K Ratliff , a commercial traveler ; judge Drake ; the Northerners Burdens , the rest belong to the category of Southern Yankee . Mostly of poor white trash origin possessed many of the traits of new planters . They were driven by a strong desire to acquire land and property. Southern Yankees succeeded to get a higher social status , a privilege of a new richest men in the region , surpassing the ancestors of respectable local families who lived in aristocratic poverty¹ . The figure of a Southern Yankee plays an outsized role in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction , most specifically in his Snopes trilogy . By stressing the capitalism development in the US South , the Snopes trilogy foreshadows the growth of the most known Southern Yankee in American literature : Flem Snopes. The latter starts his career as a shop assistant in Will Vanner's shop , and by skillfully using vices , passions and greed of people around him he became a respectable bank president .

The last class segment that Faulkner has brought into existence in his fictional kingdom – Yoknapatawpha County –is the class of poor whites or similarly known as white trash . Its major representatives are the Bundrens , the Tulls , the Armstids , Lena Gove , and many others . Unlike the Compsons who are a vivid epitome of a dysfunctional family , the Sutpens or the Snopeses are compassionate , capable of exposing joy or sorrow , happiness or sadness , this typical group in Faulkner's trilogy of classes could be understood and sympathized with . By and large , they live according to a self-imposed code of honor , purity and dignity which , though not very often , easily understandable to outsiders , prevents them to fall apart . Despite of the surrounding difficulties including the social and cultural anxieties of the time , they live their life honourably and happily. In being human , compassionate , sympathetic and caring , they prove to fulfil their dreams .

3.5. Gender

¹ It is believed that Faulkner modelled this segment of Southern social structure after the representatives of Southern poor whites : James Vardman and Theodore Biblio .

Another powerful element of Yoknapatawpha's structure that one should cast light on is gender. Faulkner's novels are regarded as male dominated and full of violence, yet an attentive reading acquaints a reader with an astonishing reality that Faulkner's female characters are also dominating, impressive and lifelike. They come out of the leaves of the novels and live in the memory of readers. Indeed, in Faulkner's body of fiction, women are not a chance-happening.

Since family constitutes the basic social unit in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha based on male dominion, woman has in an inferior role, yet firmly a defined role, she is widely considered as nothing but a property, the appearance of women as a property ideology in the US South can be traced back to its colonial beginnings. Moreover, the concept of Southern womanhood was solidly founded on a canonized discourse, resting on gender discrimination – a law, a regulation, a prescription, which authorized the interpretation of superiority and inferiority, power and subordination, masculine and feminine. In other terms, this mode of thinking rested on the idea of a masculine domination which was perceived as 'normal' and 'natural' since it was legitimized by the social order in, as Pierre Bourdieu points out: "the objectified state – in things (in the house, for example, every part of which [was] sexed), in the whole social world, and – in the embodied state – in the habitus of the agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action."¹ During the antebellum era, "Southern white womanhood ... [was] marked by fear of male violence and yet dependence on male authority, by male adulation as better than human and made degradation as less than man."²

The misogyny of gender and sexual relations in the Old South was even more visible on the example of Southern black womanhood. African American women had two major roles to play, or even three: as a slave, she worked in the plantation or in the house; as a mother and a slave she, by giving birth to her children, made new property for her master; and finally as a woman she was forced to satisfy sexual needs of both her master and her

¹ Bourdieu Pierre. *Masculine domination*. Stanford University Press, Stanford. 2001, p45

² Goodwyn Jones. "Like a Virgin" Faulkner, *Sexual Cultures and the Romance of Resistance* in: Faulkner in Cultural Context Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha County, 1995, eds. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. University Press of Mississippi. Jackson. 1997, p 56

husband. A thoughtful clarification for this matter is provided by Backman as he affirms that “for the white man, the Negroes was the female animalized and his white woman was the female spiritualized. It was as if the planters were trying to make up to his white woman for his faithfulness and duplicity.”¹ Women, black and white alike were forced to cooperate by living together. They were bound by miscegenation of their masters and separated by race and class laws of the Old South.

William Faulkner’s mythical kingdom Yoknapatawpha County is home of women of all ages, colours and classes. Having been born and brought up in conservative and traditional region. Yoknapatawpha’s women are either wives, mothers or spinsters. In creating the finest category of women characters: wives and mothers, Faulkner used typical gender markers of the patriarchal and traditional US South which required a southerner to possess a house, a plantation, money, slaves and a wife. In the same respect, to be a good wife and mother, a southern woman has to possess two major qualities: racial purity and chastity, as they were condemned as essential pillars to preserve the continuity of male hierarchy.

The second essential categorization of Faulkner’s selected women are audacious women who can exist, develop and reveal their strength without men’s mercy. This typical type of women is painted by Faulkner as deprived of Southern moral values and conducts that were of great importance. They possess neither morality, nor honor, as they are capable of betraying men without neither hesitation nor any sense of guilt. Furthermore, this category of women who refuse to be defined by the patriarchal standards, and do not want to live under men’s shadow and rules meet a strange if not a tragic end.

This mode of thinking or pattern of behavior is exemplified in characters like Drustilla Hawk, a brave woman warrior who dressed up and fought like a man during and after the war, and Janna Bundren who lived alone and ran her business like a man. By and large, in their diverse roles as wives and mothers, daughters and sisters, are according to Faulkner, an important segment of community they belong to. Despite of the fact that they very often are given a defined role, their true nature whether good or bad makes them fascinating and wonderful creations of Faulkner.

¹ Backman .M . Sutpen and the South : A Study of *Absalom Absalom!* .1965. PMLA 80 (4) p 602

4. William Faulkner's Sense of Place

“ *If you don't know where you are ... you don't know who you are* ”¹ says Wendell Berry.

Place asserts Martin Heidegger “ is the locale of the truth of being ”². It is no surprise that a great number of writers all over the world have long rendered the relationship between people and place in different manners . In light of American literary history , William Faulkner may be a case in point . Drawing upon his life in his home-place , Oxford Mississippi, Faulkner produced a literature of place widely known as Yoknapatawpha . His writings indicate the significance of place .

The more sense of place is recognizable , the more people understand their own identity . Of all the critics , Gutting in particular pays close attention to the significance of sense of place , identifying it as “ an element of heritage and inspiration to the writer which particularly identifiable in Southern literature”³ According to Gutting , the sense of place includes not only physical aspects but also the historical , social , emotional and intellectual background . She argues that “ the Southern microcosm of Yoknapatawpha is always more than mere scenery or a backdrop setting”⁴ . Her study demonstrates that the importance of place lies in its power to evoke one's awareness of his/her own value in society .

One's attachment to a typical place is closely related to the issues of identity and individuality. Relph relates the sense of belonging to the meaning of place and explains its connection with identity as follows :

¹ Solvic Scot. *Visceral Faulkner : Fiction and the Tug of the Organic World . Faulkner and the Ecology of the South* , Ed Joseph , R. Urgo and Ann J Abadie. Jackson . University Press of Mississippi .2005

² Harvey David. *From Space to Place and Black again: Reflections on the Condition of Post Modernity* , *Mapping the Future* , Ed , Jon Bird , Bary Curties , Tim Putnam , George Roberston , and Lisa Tickner. Routledge. London.1923 , p 23

³ Gutting Gabriele. *Yoknapatawpha : The Function of Geographical and Historical Facts in William Faulkner's Fictional Picture of the Deep South*. Eter Lan Frankfurt am Main , Germany .1992 p 08

⁴ *Ibid* , p11

The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence . There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up , where we live now , or where we have had particularly moving experiences . This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security , a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world .¹

According to Relph , place reflects one's rootedness and authenticity and correspondingly proves his/her presence in the world . It also enables us to explain the “ directly experienced phenomenon of the lived-world”² which can increase the sense of attachment and the degree of commitment to the place . To Relph , the connection between the actual place and the sense of rootedness is inseparable in discussing the identity issues.

Moreover , an enormous amount of critical ink flowed over the years trying to examine the multiple dimensions of Faulkner's works . Since his writing is filled with issues and commentary that it is quite difficult to choose an angle in which to read him . It seems that no matter how much criticism and available analysis on Faulkner's conception and treatment of politics , history , gender , race or character and plot development , one could not get past the overwhelming setting .

Perhaps more closely than any other American writer , William Faulkner artfully crystallized a fictional landscape out of his own physical surroundings , utilizing his created environment far more extensively than as a passive backdrop for his many characters . Heavily symbolic and thoroughly described , Faulkner's fictive space ‘Yoknapatawpha’ derives its strength of character not only from its authenticity with the hard northern Mississippi landscape .- the author called home - but much more importantly from the way in which Faulkner breathes life into the land , casting it through intense and often exhaustive demonstrations as a vital character .

¹ Relph.E . Place and Placelessness . Pion Limited. London .1976 , p43

² Ibid , p141

The Southern landscape plays a prominent role in Faulkner's writings, especially in his marvellous literary production *Absalom Absalom!* as its characters are constantly interacting with the land, using it for personal gains and evil practices until they are completely and inevitably consumed by it. Faulkner's works create a dialogue with the land, tying social and political issues to the Southern landscape.

The harsh Mississippi landscape - a land full of humidity, vermin, disease, poverty, violence, flooding and destruction - captivated one's senses. As stated and explained previously, Faulkner is a southerner deeply in touch with his roots. Faulkner's powerful representations and descriptions transport the reader into his physical landscape; a very real Mississippi struggling with race, pride, and environmental devastation. On deeper inspection, this setting not only provides the backdrop to his stories, but also plays a serious role in the plot that it forces the characters to interact with the natural world and call into question issues tied to the physical land and southern society and ideology.

By the same token, Patricia Yeager argues that "place is never simply 'place' in Southern writing, but always a site where trauma has been absorbed into the landscape"¹ Indeed, Southern writing is defined by its strong sense of place. It sheds light on a region that has undergone various traumas and holds history very deep within its exhausted soil. Completely demolished by poverty and excessive violence, the South lay in ruin into the Twentieth Century.

Another clarification for this subject matter is delivered by William Ruzicka. In his analysis of Faulkner's creation space, he asserts that "Expressive space comprises any free construction or natural formation of space which signifies, represents or symbolizes some part or act of existence. It is a shaping of space to be an image of truth"² Central to Faulkner's works is his fictive space of Yoknapatawpha County which is modelled after Lafayette County. By creating his own space, Faulkner is able to shape and use it at will, which he does. Through this fictional space, Faulkner crystallizes vivid issues about the Southern reality. Thus, the landscape setting becomes a crucial epitome, more than this,

¹Yeager Patricia. *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 2000, p 13

² Ruzicka, William T. *Faulkner's Fictive Architecture: The Meaning of Place in the Yoknapatawpha Novels*. UMI Research Press. Michigan. 1987. p 01

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a mirror and a symbolizer of the large Southern environment . What needs to be said is that Faulkner's created setting has a purpose in its name . Faulkner may not have been aware of the multiple levels of its meaning . Yet he chose a word full of implications , many of them “ ominous for the land and the people whose story he would tell ”.¹

William Faulkner's novels have left an indelible legacy in Southern and American literature . The landscape of his beloved birthplace serves as a record and not only a solely backdrop for his writings .With a devastated economic background , the depletion of natural resources and a ruined landscape , enter William Faulkner's 1930 *tours de force* *As I Lay Dying* . Written over a period of six weeks . Faulkner's fifth novel casts light on the different layers of social , political and religious matters in the American South . The story is narrated by fifteen different narrators who tell a story about a dysfunctional Bundren family on their journey to Jefferson , Mississippi to bury their dead mother . Faulkner uses the Mississippi landscape to further develop his characters , portraying the early Twentieth century southerner's relationship to the environment .

In William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* , the natural environment appears to be an overpowering force that controls the characters' actions , in doing so , it develops the characters through trauma and tragedy . He made a fantastic use of the brutal landscape of recent ecological destruction through flood and fire in the South to portray the turmoil of the early to mid-twentieth century .

As 'sole owner and proprietor' , Faulkner made a great use of elements from the landscape in ways that instruct one's vision of place as a manuscript of past and present , of old and new , of dead and living . In the same respect , Faulkner's fascinating use of natural disasters serve as a convenient means to not only crystallize real events , but mainly represent the inevitable intense forces against his characters . A thoughtful clarification that validates this point is delivered by Christopher Rieger in his noteworthy words arguing that “ the idea of nature is an important tool in the construction of the idea of the South and in the

¹ Doyle Don . Faulkner's County . The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha .The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill , North Carolina . 2001 , p 25

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construction of the actual , physical conditions of Southern society ”¹ Accordingly, The Southern landscape is not merely a simple backdrop for Faulkner’s stories , yet it plays a real, powerful , an eloquent and interactive character in the sense that the characters relate and react to it , depicting faithfully the Southern environment at that time .

By the same token , the Bundrens face two major forces of nature Flood and fire that were considered as a severe obstacle that prevented them in their mission to fulfill their mother’s dying wish and bury her in Jefferson . Faulkner’s genuine delineation of natural forces like the flooding river and the barn fire is nothing but a fruitful rendition of real disasters that had previously destroyed the Southern land three years before the novel’s publication . Thus , what needs to be said is that these forces are not randomly employed by Faulkner . Instead , they portray to a large extent serious social issues produced by environmental destruction .

The Bundrens in their journey must cross the river . What should have been an easy task is suddenly turned into a complicated attempt and dangerous struggle , leaving the characters at the mercy of the environment as they are forced to work against rushing river to save their mother’s body and complete their mission to honour her last wish “ to lay among her own people ”² in Jefferson . A real matching can be pictured from the crossing of the river scene in the book and the actual 1927 flood that took place right before . By way of illustration , in the winter of 1926 heavy rains filled the Mississippi River Valley and in spring of 1927 , the water flooded over 27 000 square miles of land , mostly in the Mississippi Delta region . Thus with the flood came increased disease , poverty and destruction of land . Southerners were fully aware of the weighty implications of the flood . It further deepened their problems , by destroying their entire homes , farms and lives , leaving them at the mercy of the wealthy white land owners .

After the Civil War era , the South was still rebuilding since it was heavily affected by the disasters of the war that left some heavy scars on its psyche . And so , the South was moving slowly yet painfully into a new phase that witnessed a start of progress and industrialization . Darl , in Faulkner’s novel *As I Lay Dying* demonstrates the water as more

¹ Rieger Christopher . *Clear-Cutting Eden : Ecology and Pastoral in Southern Literature*. Louisiana State University Press. Louisiana . 2002

² Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* , p 18

than an inanimate force . Yet , it is vividly portrayed as alive and moving . He notices the river before the family crosses it depicting how “ just beneath the surface something huge and alive waked for a moment of lazy alertness out of and into light slumber again .” ¹ The growing flood waters brought rising political , social , economic and massive racial tensions between poor southerners , wealthy white land owners and the federal government . The onset of this section prefigures what is to come : a serious fight with a living , moving and intense force the family will fear and have to fight against . What is noticeable is that the ‘land’ does not appear to be a solely setting for the characters ’ performances , yet mainly a troubling character that drives them bit by bit fall apart .

By and large , Darl gives water personality and purpose , forecasting its huge threat to the family’s mission and foreshadowing the forces that acted against the Bundrens ‘ will which are real , angry and disastrous . Through Tull’s rendering of the water , readers can feel its persistent anger against the characters . Therefore , The Bundrens seem to have no control of their environment or even their own fates . Moreover , Tull’s portrayal of the scene indicates powerfully how overwhelming the rushing river is . The Bundrens crossing of the river does not only echo the land’s physical devastation , but it unveils some of the unseen aspects against southerners in the mid 1930s that were in Darl’s noteworthy words “ just beneath the surface ” including poverty , lack of education , disease , racial tensions , excessive violence and political chaos .

Another further matter that one needs to shed light on is that the flood of 1927 had a religious connotation . In the sense that southerners would have been familiar with the story of Noah .The allusion to the Biblical story only strengthened enormously the struggle southerners faced with immobility in society and politics . Poor southerners were condemned to remain there as it seems that the land and any higher power like that of the government , industrialization , global trade market demands and perhaps even God was against any improvement . Such an infamous biblical story displays the overpowering and inevitable forces against the Bundrens as they struggle to bury “ Addie ” and also against southerners trying to flourish in a cursed region filled with disasters and poverty .

¹ Ibid , 128

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Fire , on the other hand , displays another threatening obstacle for the Bundren family to accomplish their mission . Faulkner made great advantage of water and fire as powerful tools , employing both though opposites to illuminate the degeneration in the American South caused by flooding , excessive poverty and racial tensions . Later on in the story , Darl is left with no other option , and so he decides to return to nature to end his struggle : to end the family's mission to bury Addie . In a desperate attempt to eradicate not only the existence of his mother , but the entire burden of duty to bury her and instead of resisting and going against the environment , Darl decides to give up the fight , in doing so he accepts the inevitable that comes with the Southern heritage . He becomes aware of his existence within a bitter environment .

Angry over the huge burden of carrying his mother's coffin , Darl sets the barn on fire one night , hoping to burn the coffin and be done with the awful and absurd journey . Watching Jewel run into the flames release the animals and eventually save the coffin , Darl observes “ the sound of it has become quite peaceful now like the sound of the river did ”¹ Therefore , the reader once more is drawn back to the scene of the river crossing . The river was nothing but an angry , active and a manipulating force , in Tull's words “ poking and prodding the characters . Thus , the anger of the river crystallizes the natural pitted against the characters . Both water and fire in the story are pertinent symbols of devastation . Faulkner plays successfully with such elements , knowing that he could have used only one of them to relieve the other , yet instead he employed both of them to delineate further devastation .

In a nutshell , it seems that Faulkner's writing provides no solution to some society problems . However , it highlights the fact that no matter how controversial , dishonourable or uncomfortable they maybe , on problems that have continued to faster in the way things are now. Therefore , what needs to be said is that every southern has a strong tie to their land and those in poverty never seem to be able to overcome the bitterness of the natural forces that act against them with little to no aid from those higher up in society . Instead of fighting against the uncomfortable circumstances , their existence and identity , the Bundren family has to learn how to cope with such circumstances and mainly learn not to surrender yet to exist within their environment . Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* recounts the Bundrens ' struggle as lower-class southerners navigating through the harsh Mississippi landscape , which seems to

¹ Ibid , 207

be the perfect setting of all evil . As a deduction , it can be argued that in this novel , the natural world is not solely a scenery for the Bundren family actions , more than this , it is rather a powerful character whereby the individual members of the family communicate with and utilize for examination of their own existence .

In the end , one can rightly refer to Faulkner as a master of place . His life's work was the literary creation of a singular place , historically and geographically embedded deeply and solely within the Mississippi , a powerful place and reference from which to tell universal stories solidly grounded in it .

5. The Unbearable Burden of Place : Faulkner's Rendition of the Land's Suffering

As stated formerly , William Faulkner as a son of the South and a writer could not resist the influence of his birthplace . As he could not escape the South , its past and the suffering of the land alike . Accordingly , James Watkins asserts “ the literature of the American South is characterized primarily by its deep and abiding sense of place .” It is no wonder that the setting Faulkner utilized in his literary creations act as not only a solely literary backdrop , but mainly as active and omnipresent environments that engage , challenge and change the characters as they fight against them .

To understand what Faulkner is considering about the land , one must first and foremost figure out how he tackles this issue . Therefore , it is worthy of note that Faulkner's novels are inseparable from the Southern Gothic style genre which is generally perceived as a label attached to a particular strain of literature from the American South . It is widely known as a mode or genre prevalent in literature from early nineteenth century to this day . Characteristics of the Southern Gothic include the presence of irrational , horrific and transgressive thoughts , desires and impulses , grotesque characters and dark humour . Faulkner's complex and modernist language creates in the readers a similarly Gothic sense of uncertainty and alienation .

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The Southern Gothic is uniquely and firmly rooted in the South's tensions and abbreviations . This mode of literature brings to light the region's historical realities taking concrete forms in the shape of ghosts that highlight all that has been unsaid in the official version of Southern history . While Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is a fundamental figure in the Southern Gothic , William Faulkner arguably looms the largest . His fictional kingdom 'Yoknapatawpha County' was home to the bitter Civil War defeat and the following social-racial and economic ruptures in the lives of its people . So these transformations and the resulting anxieties felt by Chicksaw Indians , poor whites , blacks and aristocratic families alike mark Faulkner's work as being deeply Gothic .

Moreover , Faulkner in his writings made a vivid use of the Southern Gothic elements including mystery , suspense , horror and gloom and he very often focuses on a typical and dark setting . Primarily in his novel *Absalom Absalom !* , Faulkner employs gothic components of mystery , ghosts and horror to cast light on the underlying environmental issues . Following the same pattern , it is noteworthy to state that in traditional Gothic plotlines , things are not always as they appear to be . Indeed , behind the beauty of the Southern landscape lies a dark and traumatic history .

Correspondingly , writes Matthews Wynn Sivil on the relationship between gothic and environment “ the power of the American environmental Gothic resides in its genius for playing upon the terror that resides behind a curtain of pastoral beauty , forcing us to recognize the ecological horror buried , corpse like in the landscape .”¹ At first glance , the horror is embedded and easy to miss . Thomas Sutpen's “design” for his life is according to his society's standards a brilliant and eloquent story of a successful man . Nevertheless , what is important to cast light on is that Sutpen's success was built upon the backs of his slaves . Again , Sivil endorses this point in his following noteworthy words : “ The pastoral beauty of the Antebellum South , cloathed with lavish mansions , plantations and strict social codes , cloaks the brutality of slavery and the blood of the exploited bodies which the society was built.”²

¹ Sivil Matthew Wynn . *American Gothic and the Environment 1880-Present* the Gothic World .Ed Byron . Glennis and Dale Townshend . New York. 2014 . p 130

² *Ibid* , 112

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In a like manner, Sivil's powerful reference to corpses is a major element of gothic stories, referring to the dead return. Much like ghosts of traditional Gothic narratives, the ghosts of slaves and exploited land haunt the characters to an awful evil end, relying on gothic themes which artfully create haunting memory revealing that the Southern land unites the Southern characters for generations, binding them together in memory. Indeed, the sins performed by the past Southerners haunt the next generations of southerners as they all carry the heavy burden of their Southern heritage. Accordingly, Quentin Compson feels a strong connection to Thomas Sutpen as a Southerner.

At the very outset, the novel opens in the house of Miss Rosa Coldfield who in many ways embodies a Gothic heroine. She appears to be a Southern ghost herself, quite ready to pass on her burden of heritage to young Quentin. Miss Rosa's story which is told in the gothic manner and in the gothic language, "defines her as some kind of supernatural being, as ghost or vampire or fury ... and pours her literary consciousness into writing the Sutpen story as an elaborate gothic fiction"¹ As a creator of her own gothic narrative, Miss Rosa introduces herself as a gothic heroine by placing herself in the setting of a dark and terrifying castle with an evil villain (Thomas Sutpen) and his innocent victims (his entire family), dares into the unknown is subjected to Sutpen's sexual harassment, and discovers the family secret (Sutpen's first marriage).

In true Gothic storytelling forms, the characters are always depicted as being haunted by their unresolved past, trying to establish a legacy on 'the blood soaked ground'. The ghosts of the defeated confederates, shame for violence and unsaid sins in Sivil words 'hang in the hot air like humidity'. The memories of the South's Lost Cause, exploitation, and shame are highlighted as ever-present, haunting memories in the Southern landscape. As a result, the mystery and haunting of Southern history created a horror associated with the southern environment and the minds of characters as they appear to be unable to cope with their heritage. To this end, Elizabeth Kerr asserts that in using the Gothic tradition of writing the horrors into the landscape, Faulkner is able to convey "the transmogrification of the American dream into the American nightmare."²

¹ Roberts Diane. *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood*. The University of Georgia Press. Athens/London. 1994, p63

² Elizabeth Kerr M. *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain*. Kennikat Press Corp. New York. 1979, p 52

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Correspondingly, Sutpen's Hundred, his perfect 'design' loom over the characters in the story as a recurrent reminder of their heritage and all they have worked to build and protect. Sutpen's plantation built at the expense of his slaves exemplifies thoroughly how the South's violent and assertive exploitation of land, people and resources created this 'nightmare' that literally and even metaphorically went up in flames.

As a further matter, the destruction seems to have wider implications since it is not limited solely to the American soil, yet it goes beyond its borders, pointing at the fact that the haunting Southern heritage is not just a regional problem. Faulkner made a great advantage of the gothic tradition to demonstrate successfully and artfully the issues of the Southern land, and more specifically, Faulkner's true endeavour is to bring light on the United States relationship with Haiti.

And so, William Faulkner's use of the gothic storytelling becomes palpable in the sense that he employed genuinely this particular genre to critique the United States' contentious relationship with Haiti that had spanned for so many years. As a former French colony, Haiti was soon filled with imported African slaves and was a bitter home for evil practices. By the end of the eighteenth century, Haiti was firmly known as having an established slave trade with the United States and as a result much of the American slave labor system was labelled after the Haitian one.

The bloody Haitian Slave Revolt in 1791 ended slavery in Haiti, but also brought a ponderous paranoia in the South that the rebellion would spread to the United States of America. And so, the US government sent aid to the whites in Haiti, accepted to immigrate slaveholders and inflict harsher slave codes on their own slaves to discourage any ideas of revolt. Slavery, in the US was practiced legally, it was only in 1865 that it faced a violent end. What is essential to cast light on is that with all that bloody history in mind, Sutpen's slaves are from Haiti. Haitian landscape and people, much more specifically African slaves imported to work Haitian sugar plantations hold the lion's share in Faulkner's writing as they render Sutpen's relationship with the environment from agricultural to a more large perspective.

Unavoidably, William Faulkner's 1936 masterpiece *Absalom Absalom!* appears to be a novel in *Ulysses* shadow. It exemplifies genuinely his strained intricate and complicated

relationship through the writer's thoughtful selection of characters like that of 'Thomas Sutpen' as a being a powerful embodiment of southern history . According to Miss Rosa's narrative , Sutpen appeared in the frontier town of Jefferson , Mississippi and by some translation the nature of which is never explained – though it certainly was not by honest purchase – he obtained a hundred square miles of land from the Chicksawas . He disappeared so that he returns later on with twenty negroes from the jungle and a French architect .

On the day of his return , he set about building the largest house and plantation in northern Mississippi : Sutpen's Hundred . Following the gothic trope of a large , mysterious, castle-like structure , Sutpen's Hundred becomes the epitome of Sutpen's quest to establish a bloodline . Rosa Coldfield depicts the fast and furious building process : “ He now had a plantation ; inside of two years he had dragged house and gardens out of virgin swamp , and plowed and planted his land with seed cotton which General Compson loaned him . ”¹ Correspondingly , the language Faulkner uses here carries heavy undertones of rape , foreshadowing the fact that Sutpen “dragged” his plantation “out of virgin swamp” , indicating excessive force and harshness . He takes absolute dominion over the land , plowing and planting , making great use of it to create his own dynasty .

Only one man in Jefferson - who was Quentin's grandfather General Compson – ever learned how and where Sutpen had acquired his slaves . He had shipped to Haiti from Virginia , worked as an overseer on a sugar plantation and married the rich planter's daughter, with whom he had a son . But after figuring out that his wife had Negro blood , he had simply put her away with her child and fortune , while keeping the twenty slaves as a sort of assurance . Sutpen explained to General Compson that he had taught himself that she could not be appropriate for the forwarding of the design .

In tracing Sutpen's experience as an overseer at a Haitian sugar plantation , *Absalom Absalom !* projects a parable of enslavement upon a haunted landscape marked by “the yet intact bones and brains in which the old unsleeping blood that had vanished into the earth they trod still cried out for vengeance”² Haiti is a place where fields of sugar rise from “soil manured with black blood from two hundred years of oppression and explanation.” A “ little lost island in a latitude which would require ten thousand years of equatorial heritage to bear

¹ *Absalom Absalom !* , p 30

² *Ibid* , 202

its climate.”¹ Its plantations drenched in the blood of black people , intertwine human suffering with the land itself .

To this end , Faulkner emphasizes a gothic ecology of exploitation in which whites enslave blacks , who work a land that ultimately incorporates their bodies and pain transforming it into food for white bodies dependent on this system of oppression . Sutpen transfers this system to the one hundred square miles of Mississippi land he acquires from the Chickasaws , using slave labor to build a dynastic design.

Quentin continues , Sutpen married again . This time his wife was of a wellborn decent , she belonged to a pious family and she bore him two children : Henry and Judith . Later on in the story , Sutpen is described as the biggest landowner and cotton planter in the county , and it seemed that his ‘ design ’ had already been fulfilled . In 1859 , Christmas day , Henry came home from the University of Mississippi with a new friend Charles Bon , who was in reality Sutpen’s son by his first marriage . Bon is black and therefore unwelcome to the family because his heritage contradicts Sutpen’s desired bloodline , yet later on in the story , Charles became engaged to Judith .

Moreover , Sutpen tells Henry of bon’s mixed race , and initially Henry refuses to believe that Charles was his half-brother . In 1861 , all the male Suptens went off to war , and all of them survived four years of fighting . In the spring of 1865 , Charles decides to marry Judith , even though he was quite certain that she was his half-sister . Therefore , Henry rode beside him all the way back to Sutpen’s Hundred , tried to stop him at the gate , and killed him in a climactic scene when he insisted on going ahead with his plan , told Judith what he had done and disappeared , representing white supremacy over the black body in the shadow of plantation . Peter Schmidt delineates the conflict as follows : “Bon obviously is not a black, nor is he a white son and heir.”² Accordingly , Bon appears to be trapped between identities and fates , representative of the Old and New South ideologies . Since the two cannot coexist, he meets a violent end and is shot dead by his white brother in front of his white father’s home . According to Henry Sutpen , Bon’s identity , body , purpose and life are called into

¹ Ibid

² Schmidt Peter . “ Truth So Mazed : Faulkner and US Plantation Fiction.” William Faulkner in Context , Ed . Mathews John T. Cambridge University Press. New York .2015 . p 172

question . For Thomas and Henry Sutpen , the violence , suffering and exploitation of land and the black were of utmost significance to fulfill the design of their Southern dynasty .

In the same respect , it can be argued that Faulkner's thoughtful selection of characters and incidents appear to have a double meaning , meaning that besides their position in the story , they also serve as vivid symbols or metaphors with a general implication . Sutpen's great design , the land he stole from the Indians , the French architect who build is house with the help of Negroes from the jungle , the woman of mixed blood whom he married and disavowed , the unacknowledged son who ruined him , all these fictional illustrations might belong to a tragic story of southern history .

In utilizing the genre of the gothic to mediate the relationship between psychic mood and environmental atmosphere , Faulkner situates the landscape of the South within larger issues of political economy and a globalized time and space destabilizing the parochialism and anti-intellectualism that have been used to set off the South as an exceptional portion from the rest of the United States .

As a further matter , Sutpen's effective use of the land as a convenient means for his own profits demonstrates not only a southern , but ultimately an American way of exploitation that haunts southerners throughout the novel . The consequences cause the struggle to reconcile the abusive relationship with the land . Quentin's grandfather who is a friend of Sutpen's , calls the land of Haiti “ a spot of earth which might have been created and set aside by Heaven itself , Grandfather said as a theatre for violence and injustice and bloodshed and all the satanic lusts of human greed and cruelty.”¹ These can be widely perceived as harsh and condemning word , yet for Faulkner they are not erroneous .

Sutpen is easily considered and identified as a villain of the story , which is firmly due to his evil practices and wrongdoings that are filled with greed and deceit , seemingly unable to empathize with humane emotions . Nevertheless , Sutpen's character is not limited to himself , nor is he a unique representation of himself , more than this , he crystallizes a larger Southern society : one obsessed with power , dominion , reputation , and wealth, willing to do whatever is necessary to establish a dynasty .

¹ Ibid

Accordingly, this matter seems to be not bound to the American South particularly, yet stretches globally to the Caribbean. To illustrate this, Valérie Loichot, in her essay on how Faulkner utilizes Caribbean spaces, asserts that by employing the Caribbean land in his writings, “Faulkner locates the problematic roots of the Mississippi plantation in post-revolutionary Haiti”¹ Therefore, Sutpen’s character unites the two places together and allows readers to recognize the controversial relationship between them. The past sins are not typical to one region, they instead have wider, greater and even global connotations.

One of the insightful fictional instances that has been demonstrated in the story is Sutpen’s narrative of a crucial discovery in his young life. That was how I learned of the West Indies. He recalls “Now where they were, though if I had known at the time that that knowledge would some day serve me. I would have learnt that too. What I learned was that there was a place called the West Indies to which poor men went in ships and became rich, it didn’t matter how, so long as that man was clever and courageous”²

At an early age, as a southerner, or more specifically as a white male, Sutpen learns of his own incredible power of dominion. Sutpen uses the West Indies to strengthen himself, collecting slaves and getting wealthy thanks to its resources and at the expense of others. According to Sutpen, the West Indies is a mysterious wonderland full of resources. Once more, this portrayal strangely carries some weighty implications of rape. Land, in the story, is illuminated as a merely a product to be consumed.

In order to further and sustain his ambition, Sutpen’s dominion over the land seems only logical if not necessary. The influential John Matthews, in his article on the relationship between Haiti and Faulkner’s South, argues that young Sutpen’s innocence represents the larger South’s views on slavery and exploitation. By the passage of time, wilful ignorance had laid to naïve ignorance. As a deduction, Matthews asserts that “Sutpen launches his design with that obviousness that is American innocence”³ Sutpen strangely believes that he is entitled to the land and its people.

¹ Loichot Valérie. “William Faulkner’s Caribbean Poetics” William Faulkner in Context, Ed Matthews John T. Cambridge University Press. New York. 2015, p 47

² *Absalom Absalom*, p 195

³ Matthews John, T. “Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back”. Cambridge University Press. New York. 2015, p 238

The South transformed the entire region into a large-scale plantation system , completely relying on the forced labour of slaves , exhausting both the land and people . When the bloody Civil War destroyed all they had worked for , they had simply nothing left . They had already exhausted the land and had taken too much from it . This overlooking of the history of slavery in the Caribbean and the South eventually catches up to them , as Quentin struggled with his hatred of the South and Clytie , out of fear and no other options left burns down Sutpen's Hundred in a murder-suicide that destroys tremendously the Sutpen's dynasty and legacy as well .

Additionally , it is worthy of note to state that the land was not the only thing being exploited . The white supremacy was solidly grounded in the assumption that blacks needed to be controlled and Faulkner's ecology appears to be packed with racism . To explore this issue , one may cite a fictional instance where Quentin's narrative of his grandfather's tale carries on as he shifts from the use of land to “ the planting of men too : the yet intact bones and brains in which the old unsleeping blood that had vanished into the earth they trod still cried out for vengeance ”¹

Again , it seems that Faulkner renders the land as a product to be consumed and exploited . The land was first taken forcefully from the Indians then it was transformed by the whites into a home for bitter actions . Thus , the land ran with blood of those who had worked it for so long . It can be argued that the land's exploitation illuminates the Southern awful history of plantations and dynasties as being one of the dreadful chapters in the US history , more than this , it demonstrates the exploitation of innocent people ; black bodies .

One of the eye-catching fictive scenes rendered by Faulkner is Sutpen's strained relationship with his slaves and his son . In *The Faulkner Journal* , Kevin Raiely displays the system of the South's racial ideology , stating that racial identity “ is a social construction whose origin was formulated as conscious ruling class policy designed to serve specific social purposes and maintain specific class relations . ”² This pattern of behaviour or mainly system of ideology is pervasive in both Southern portion of the United States and the Caribbean . The plantation model held greater power than simply supplying the South with the cash crop of cotton .

¹ *Absalom Absalom !* , p 202

² Railey Kevin . “ *Absalom Absalom !* and the Southern Ideology of Race ” *The Faulkner Journal* .14.2 (1999)p04

A genuine clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Matthews Guterl in his following note worthy words : “ it (the plantation system) enabled the survival of particular form of white supremacy.”¹ As highlighted previously , the plantation system of slavery was a form of social control that dehumanized African slaves , stripping them of all individual value and rights , making them objects to be bought , sold , and more particularly used to work the land . differently said , this exploitation of the black body is another issue haunting the characters as they struggle to reconcile in a region filled with dishonourable realities and racial tensions .

Another powerful and fruitful fictional instance that is of great significance is revealed by Rosa Coldfield . Early in the novel , she narrates a vivid scene , as she is telling of Sutpen’s marriage to her sister . Ellen , one night , Ellen goes into the stable to see what is going on. There , to her horror , she notices “ into centre two of wild negroes fighting , naked, fighting not like white men fight , with rules and weapons , but like negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad.”² Her own husband had joined as well “ naked and panting and bloody to the waist ”³

Correspondingly , the language Faulkner employs to portray Sutpen’s slaves throughout the novel carries heavy connotations as it describes them as violent ,wild and dangerous . Sutpen seems to be always in the middle of the chaos . He causes trouble , encouraging violent attitudes and practices . Thus , Sutpen considers himself as a master of the slaves , training them and teaching them wild behaviour as if they were animals . According to southerners , the Caribbean is mysterious and untamed , much like Sutpen’s slaves . They , just like the land , are subject to exploitation ; something to be claimed and ruled .

In essence , it is quite plausible to note that Faulkner’s masterpiece *Absalom Absalom!* is an incisive and engaging novel that succeeds in bringing a dear and illuminating image of the land’s suffering . As it cries at the injustices done to the land and people in the US South. Thomas Sutpen’s true light was to strengthen and perfect his Sutpen’s Hundred plantation and establish a dynasty of his won by exploiting everything around him . His evil

¹ Guterl Matthew , Pratt . “ A Gulf Society” , William Faulkner in Context , Ed.Matthews John T . Cambridge University Press. New York . 2015 , p 36

² Ibid , 20

³ Ibid , 21

actions in particular and the attitudes of southerners result in the future generations being haunted by the shame of a land built at the expense and the blood of African slaves . But the question is at what point does it become , as Philip Weinstein dubs it ‘the land’s turn’? . To this end , the following thoughtful fictional illustration by Quentin’s father clarifies artfully this subject matter when he tells him : “ it is going to turn and destroy us all someday , whether our name happens to be Sutpen or Coldfield or not ”¹

Following a traditional Faulknerian literary style , characters have no happy endings , instead they meet massive violent ends . By way of illustration , Charles Bon is shot outside the gates of Sutpen’s Hundred by his best friend . Thomas Sutpen , on the other hand , is murdered by a lower-class servant . In one of the final scenes of the novel , Clytie the child of Sutpen and a slave , notices the police coming up the road to arrest Henry Sutpen who has been hiding in the house for years for the murder of Charles Bon as he sets the house on fire , killing herself and Henry in a dramatic fury .

In the same respect , Sutpen’s Hundred , the allegory of the Southern plantation system , the heart of Sutpen’s insane quest for power , and the symbol of white supremacy through exploitation “ collapsed and roared away , and there was only the sound of the idiot negro left ”². The fire destroyed all Sutpen and the South had worked for . Everything Sutpen had established including his home , his plantation , his slaves, his family and his legacy burned to ashes , for his violent conquest met a rampant violent end .

Correspondingly , it would seem that , as the natural cycle demands , these characters go up in noisy , destructive flames , both literally and figuratively. However , this seems to be the only fitting ending to such a tragic narrative . Quentin’s grandfather portrays the consequences of continued exploitation “ as if nature held a balance and kept a book and offered a recompense for the torn limbs and outraged hearts even if man did not. ”³ It becomes quite palpable that nature has the final say in dominion as Sutpen’s Hundred is burned to the ground . These wrongdoings can not go unpunished , but the punishment is still pervasive in the conflicting ideology and racism that is continued in the South .

¹ Ibid , 07

² Ibid , 301

³ Ibid , 202

Chapter Two: Locating the Stage

In the final analysis, it can be argued that in utilizing the Gothic tradition, Faulkner the long-buried ghosts of exploitation, forcing the characters like Quentin to wrestle with the consequences of exploitation. The evil abuse of land and people in the Southern region of the United States and the West Indies eventually, as Faulkner displays, has no other choice but to come to a violent end. The two ideals of the Old and New South cannot exist together and progress cannot be made until the problem is resolved. Faulkner affirms that until these issues are recognized, destruction will reign in the South.

Conclusion

As the second chapter comes to an end , it is quite essential to construct a sort of recapitulation to make all the aforementioned points palpable for readers so that to get a better understanding of the highlighted points that were addressed in this chapter . A fundamental matter that this chapter has attempted to shed light on is the fictional setting that Faulkner created - Yoknapatawpha County – as highlighted formerly , this setting was crystallized as not only fictional yet alive backdrop .

The fictions of Yoknapatawpha County were filtered from real events , memories , stories told at the family gatherings or at county drug-stores . Thus Yoknapatawpha remains his unique territory of which he is not only “ sole proprietor ” but mainly sovereign king . In his preface to *Portable Faulkner* , Malcolm Cowley asserts that Faulkner performed a labour of imagination that has not been equalled in his time , and a double labour : first , to invent a Mississippi County which was like a mythical kingdom , but was complete and living in its details ; second , to make his story of Yoknapatawpha County stand as a parable or legend of all the deep South . For this double task , Faulkner was better equipped by talent , merit , courage and background than he was by schooling .

Faulkner’s cycle of fiction reflects the distinct heritage of the American South . Indeed , his homeland provided the geographical and cultural background for the Yoknapatawpha County of his novels and short stories . Sefarin John asserts that “ In the thirties Faulkner reached the peak of his thematic and technical development and continued to portray the South’s racial dilemma , its sterility and its obsessive violence ”.¹ Yoknapatawpha County stands as a myth or legend of the entire South . Each novel and short story seems to reveal more than it states explicitly . Faulkner is always conscious of the wider applications of

¹ Serafin , John M . *Faulkner’s Use of the Classics* . UMI Research Press , Ann Arbor .Michigan . 1983 . p 1.2

his themes . Even if the pattern is presented in terms of a single Mississippi County , it can be extended to the deep South as a whole .

There was Yoknapatawpha County and it was an imaginary place based upon a real county in the Deep South , but this was only a microcosm of the universe which Faulkner imaginatively inhabited . It was from the soil and society of his native region that Faulkner conjured up Yoknapatawpha County and its various characters . Of his inspiration , Faulkner once said “ I was trying to talk about people , using the only tool I knew , which was the country I knew. ” ¹ To this end , it can be argued that Faulkner created Yoknapatawpha by combining the real , the modified and the imaginary , in doing so , his county appears to be a fictional kingdom whereby reality was blended with fabrication .

One of the chief points highlighted in this chapter is the divergent similarities that exist between the real Lafayette County and Yoknapatawpha County foreshadowing the fact that Faulkner was deeply affected in his writing by his birthplace where he grew up as a child and would continue to live his life till the end . Therefore , it is noteworthy to mention that Yoknapatawpha appears to be not only as a genuine replica to Lafayette County , but mainly a microcosm of the South as a whole .

Another key matter addressed in this chapter was Faulkner’s sense of the Mississippi landscape . The setting that he selected for his writings provides the backdrop of his stories, but also plays a crucial role in the plot that it forces the characters to interact with the natural world and call into question issues tied to the physical land and Southern society and ideology. Faulkner makes the land come alive , and it is angry over the injustices committed in the name of progress and prosperity . The land cries out in punishment , demanding blood for the blood that was spilled upon its soil .

In a similar vein , Faulkner is warning the South that the past is gone , yet its sins still haunt the heritage of the New South . The land devastation and racial violence carry weighty consequences and stand in the way of any progress being made towards healing , rebuilding , or reconciliation . Southern identity bears a massive , haunting cost of inheritance . Correspondingly , it is of great importance to note that Faulkner does not celebrate the glory

¹ Michael Grimwood. *Heart in Conflict : Faulkner’s Struggles with Vocation* . University of Georgia Press. Georgia . 1987 .p 134

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of Antebellum America , yet he calls out its deep flaws , claiming that these problems still haunt the landscape .

Chapter Three

The End of an Order

Introduction

But the South¹ ...is dead , was killed
by the Civil War. There is a thing
Known whimsically as the New South
to be sure , but it is not the South²

In order to accumulate a miscellaneous body of gen and material , another momentous point that permits another chapter to lay down its luggage is going to be at the core of this affluent part of the literature based thesis . Indeed , stepping forward the gist of this thesis is vastly essential as it is a fundamental section that readers should be acquainted with . As it is going to cast light on a set of important issues .

William Faulkner , the most celebrated American novelist of international fame has always and long been appreciated for his technical virtuosity , philosophical attitude , humanistic approach and moral vision . Indeed , his fiction attracts and fascinates the readers from various countries as he writes about the dilemma , deprivations , complexes , compulsions faith , pity and love of a common man . Faulkner believed that mental sickness and disorder among the masses started from the moment in history when people discarded moral values .

According to Faulkner , a man differs from an animal only because he possesses the qualities like “ gratitude for kindness , fidelity to friendship , chivalry toward women and the capacity to love”³ He opined that this world can be protected by involving the humanitarians in science and scientists in humanity . Moreover , he was of the view that man will survive because he is tough , and can face calamities , grief and despair . As he also insisted upon

¹ The South to which Faulkner refers to in the above passage is that of legends. As highlighted in the preceding chapters , the US South is unlike any other portion in the USA ,it witnessed some noticeable events that transformed the region and had a weighty impact on its psyche .And so , the American South was slowly yet painfully moving on into a New South .

² Quoted from Faulkner’s Introduction to The Sound and the Fury , p70

³ Meriwether James B . The Literary Career of William Faulkner .The Princeton University Library . USA. 1960 p 71

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man's responsibility to have an awakened conscience which can differentiate between right and wrong because Man's immorality depends upon his courage to choose the right path .

Malcolm Cowley in his " Introduction" in *The Portable Faulkner* (1946) has claimed that the pattern of Faulkner's fiction is based on stories heard in his childhood , yet he transformed the material by adding emotions , passions , thoughts , feelings , ideologies and conceptions . Consequently his characters appear to be real human beings. The aged characters seem to represent the Old South while the young ones are shown affected by the loss of moral values in post-war world and increasing commercialization . As he also suggested that Faulkner's many characters and incidents have a double meaning and serve as symbols . His novels possess the quality of " being lived , absorbed , remembered rather than merely observed"¹

Being a descendant of the American South , William Faulkner has been able to notice the great gap the war made between the greatness of the agrarian pre-war American South and the corruption of the same society hereafter . Some of Faulkner's novels render the corruption of the Southern aristocracy after the destruction of its wealth and way of life during the Civil War . Faulkner populates his novels about the South with old mansions , the inhabitants of which are noble families that fail to live up to their past greatness . Beneath the shadow of the old grandeur , these families attempt to cling to the old Southern values and codes that are corrupted and out of place in the reality of the modern world . The families in Faulkner's fictional world are rife with irresponsible parents , failed sons and disgraced daughters .

To explore this subject matter , Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* will be carefully analyzed . It renders artfully and masterfully his region's painful decadence in terms of loss of values and moral principles .The themes that connote the South's lack of a moral centre are painted through the brutal and exceedingly passionate nature of Faulkner's successful selection of characters " the Compsons" who represent not only the downfall of the Southern aristocracy , but mainly the collapse of a complete social order .

¹ Ibid , xxv

1. The Decay of the Southern Morality

The aristocratic tradition of the Old South was basically founded upon puritan uprightness and moral integrity. Because of its unshakeable ethical values, the Southern community isolated itself from the outer world, and gradually became a backward-looking society. Consequently, the aristocrats moved towards a process of moral degeneration. Apart from its conservatism, the South was heavily troubled with the system of slavery which constituted its financial basis. The white man's exploitation, maltreatment and sexual abuse of slaves resulted in the gradual disrepute of the Old South.

The sectional conflict between the industrial North and the agricultural South led to the outbreak of the Civil War. Consequently, the American South as a loser in the war, was never able to recover its economic and moral dissolution. The previously prominent aristocrats succumbed to self absorption and fatalism. William Faulkner, as a native Mississippian, was born to a family with noble origins, placed much weight on the devastating decay of the Southern aristocracy in his literary creations.

Most of Faulkner's literary creations follow the lives of the Southern aristocratic families. As a member born and raised in the American South, Faulkner appears to be quite obsessed with the history of his region which he has always cherished and glorified. In his marvellous fiction, through an artful selection of characters, Faulkner crystallizes the decay of the Old South and the loss of its prominent traditional values and moral conducts. Most remarkably in his masterpiece *The Sound and the Fury* whereby he foreshadows the new adopted values and the loss of the old ones.

As a further matter, William Faulkner's indisputable loyalty and deep attachment to his native birthplace – the American South - and his great obsession with the once grand tradition into which he was born permitted Faulkner to paint the decay of the prominent values that used to form the backbone of the Southern aristocracy in his writings. As a member of the family who regarded themselves as aristocrats Faulkner grew up in an environment where the ethical manners, wealth and social status were of utmost significance.

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In the same regard , Faulkner could not escape nor resist the tremendous influence of the somewhat proud and mannered attitudes of his family. Unavoidably , his deep love and appreciation of the morals of the Southern aristocracy are recognizable .

Along with his aristocratic origins , the fact that Faulkner's ancestors were renowned figures in the history of his hometown enabled him to absorb a powerful devotion to the morals of Southern aristocracy . Moreover , Faulkner grew up with stories about his glorious great-grandfather : William Clark Falkner , a notable colonel who served for the confederate Army during the Civil War era . His strong admiration and appreciation for his great-grandfather are elucidated in the following lines :

My great-grandfather , whose name I bear , was a considerable figure in his time and provincial milieu . He was a prototype of John Sartoris , commanded the second Mississippi infantry ... he built the first railroad in our country , wrote a few books , made grand European tour of his time , died duel and the country raised a marble effigy which still stands in Tippah Country .¹

Faulkner's commitment to the Southern aristocracy had an unquestionable effect on the formation of his sentiments of the ideal South . The fundamental concepts that the tradition was founded upon such as pride , purity , honour , gallantry , bravery , honesty , grace, satisfaction of women , and devotedness to the preservation of the region's integrity were tremendously important for Faulkner . As a result , the deterioration of such concepts and moral conducts after the Civil War had a weighty effect on his sense of history . A genuine clarification for this matter is provided by Coughlan Robert in his following words

The glorious events of the old days , especially the days during and before the [Civil] war , loomed in the misty distance pure , brave , and out of human scale ; the present , in contrast , was mundane , and its inadequacies – physical and emotional – were laid to the tragedy of the old defeat ... the South lapsed into the nurturing of a legend .²

¹ Louis D.Rubin . The History of Southern Literature . Louisiana State University Press .USA. 1985 , p333

² Robert Coughlan . The Private World of William Faulkner. Harper and Brothers. USA. 1954 , p 87

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Confronting the displeasing and distressing reality of the present state of the South was dreadfully difficult for Faulkner . This can have a direct contact with the disturbing elements of the history of the Southern aristocracy . Slave abuse and brutality , the land exploitation , bigotry and conservatism were the solid grounds that the Southern tradition was firmly established upon . What needs to be said is that Faulkner was aware of the dishonourable facts about his history ; nevertheless , he could not disregard nor could he resist his commitment to the Southern aristocracy and morality .

Correspondingly , Faulkner adopted a single method of handling this situation which empowered him to foreshadow the reality of the history of the Southern aristocracy . Therefore , to convey his keen notion of the devastation of the southern moral order , he created a mythical demonstration in which he could remain distant to the critique of his own history and tradition . Irving Howe provides a thoughtful elucidation of this matter as follows:

Faulkner in his stories and novels has been conducting a long , sometimes painful and at other times heroic examination of the Southern myth. He has set his pride in the past against his despair over the present , and from this counterpoint has come much of the tension in his work . He has investigated the myth itself ; wondered about the relation between the Southern tradition he admires and that memory of Southern slavery to which he is compelled to return , tested not only the present by the past , but also the past by the myth , and finally the myth by that morality which has slowly emerged from this entire process of exploration. This testing of the myth ... is basic to the Yoknapatawpha novels and stories .¹

In the light of the above quotation , it can be argued that the finest way for Faulkner to create a mythical portrayal was to produce a fictional world of his own in which he could convey freely yet artfully his keen observation and notion of the end of an order , a decay of the previously illustrious Southern tradition . It is of essence to note that the characters

¹ Irving Howe . William Faulkner : His World and His Work . Vintage Books . New York.1962 , p29

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Faulkner employed in his fictitious world , modelled after his birthplace , epitomize the reasons and outcomes of the Southern moral descent in terms of his own appreciation . Faulkner's thoughtful creation of characters is typical of the history of the South .

Most of the families populated in Yoknapatawpha County crystallize the theme of downfall in different ways with regard to morality , wealth and status . The social status which is of extreme significance to the Southern family , varies from noble aristocrats to common lower-class people who do not act within the frame of Southern ethical morals and conducts . A comprehensive demonstration of Faulkner's selection of characters is delivered by George Marion in his essay Faulkner's Mythology as such :

In Mr. Faulkner's mythology there are two kinds of characters ; they are the Sartoris or Snopeses¹ , whatever the family names maybe . And in the spiritual geography of Mr. Faulkner's work there are two worlds : the Sartoris world and the Snopes world. In all of his successful books , he is exploring the two worlds in detail , dramatizing the inevitable conflict between them ... the Sartoris act traditionally ; that is to say , they act always with an ethically responsible will . They present vital morality ... Being antitraditional , the Snopeses are immoral from the Sartoris point of view. But the Snopeses do not recognize this point of view ; acting only for self-interest , they acknowledge no ethical duty.²

The vital Southern morality is masterfully exemplified by the Compsons in *The Sound and the Fury* , an aristocratic family which was once prominent and illustrious . They follow all the necessities of the long-established conventions of the Southern aristocracy. In total opposition to such upper-class representatives of nobility , the members of the Snopes world demonstrate complete divergence from the manners of the Southern tradition . Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom Absalom !* is a fruitful example of a morally decayed person whose only purpose in life is to establish a dynasty of his own , through evil and illegal

¹ The major representative of the Snopes tradition is Flem Snopes. Colonel John Sartoris , on the other hand , is a major and recurrent figure in Faulkner's fiction who represents the Sartoris tradition . He is the type of character that Faulkner patterned upon his illustrious great-grandfather : Colonel William Clark Falkner , he exemplifies all the fascinating features of a Southern gentleman.

² Hoffman Fredrick. William Faulkner : Three Decades of Criticism .Vintage Books.1963 , p83

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means . The Bundrens in *As I Lay Dying* , on the other hand , demonstrates a vivid image of poor families who struggle severely to survive . Their massive poverty and ignorance prevent them from acting within the ethical norms and conducts of the Southern tradition .

As highlighted previously , Faulkner intended to render the discordance of the past and the present states of the American South by ‘ sublimating the actual into the apocryphal’ . The conflict of the presently ague but once determined and indivisible aspirations and visions of the past , and the feeble and preoccupied state of the present are depicted by the Yoknapatawpha inhabitants who are in an unceasing experience of controversy . A genuine clarification for this point is provided by Richard Gray who foreshadows the condition of southerners Faulkner utilized in his novels as follows :

Southerners of Faulkner’s generation felt themselves to be haunted by ghosts and , in effect , rendered impotent by them. In their case , those ghosts came from the general . social and cultural past than from the personal , but the consequences were essentially the same . They left denied the capacity for meaningful action , they sought escape from the cunning passages and contrived corridors of history but found , for the most part , no way out. ¹

Faulkner penetrates the disintegration of the aristocratic families during the early twentieth century , which was a period of radical change . According to the historical record and sources , the major event around which the American South history resolves is the Civil War it split not only the nation but the history of the US South into two different parts . The first era is known as the pre-war and also regarded as the antebellum South of slavery , plantation life and rigid social and moral norms , since it ‘ was the defining feature of the region and its people ’ . As Philips asserts that it (slavery) “ was not merely to provide control of labour but also a system of racial adjustment and social order”² Then , the Civil War came into existence causing a massive upheaval in the southern society , yet it witnessed the

¹ Richard Gray . *The Life of William Faulkner* . Blackwell Publishers Inc . Massachusetts . 1996 , p24

² Boles John B . *A Companion to the American South* . Blackwell Publishers . Oxford. 2002 , p236

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beginning of the post-war or the so-called post-bellum South . It is the time when the South find itself in ruins looking for its true identity and social order , torn between the period of the Old South when slavery and the plantation system presented the core of the society and the period of modernism whereby the main focus was on industrialization and urbanization which were imposed by the North on the rest of the United States.

In a like manner , Faulkner may have grown up long after the end of the war , yet the war was still going on metaphorically in the heads of the people who tried tirelessly to restore the South to its glorious pre-war state while opposing to modernization imposed by the North. To this end , the South found itself stuck between the glorious past and modernistic present . “ the archaic values of the Old South were irreconcilable with the times of drastic change.”¹

The mind of the South and its people as well was dichotomized . One part wanted to cast the chains of the past and to be reborn in the new era . These people were known as the progressivists . Others , on the other hand , glorified the South and wanted to return to its pre-war state and revive the plantation life and the slavery system . These were referred to as the traditionalists . “ While the movement toward modernism was threatening to dehumanize the modern man , Faulkner considered resistance to change as equally damaging”² . And so , Faulkner lived in a gloomy atmosphere and a torn region which was trapped in an eternal quest for its identity .

Another major event that had an overpowering impact on the United States in general and the American South in particular was the First World War . After World War I, America was in a delicate state of disillusionment and people found themselves in a crisis of morals , which died and vanished and were gone with the wind , and the chaos of the modern world . It was dreadfully difficult, especially for the South which prided itself on the glorious past , to adopt the new spirit of the post-First World War , Thus , the South was concurrently living in the post-Civil War and the post-First World War era . Consequently , the American South displayed antipathy to everything new that appeared to corrupt the values

¹ Obenauer , Julian. Sound and Fury Echoes Through Time .Philipps-Uniersitat Marburg , 2015 : p 1-5

² Johnson Nathan . No More a Walking Shadow William Faulkner and the Fight against Modernism. Bryan College .2015. p 03

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of the Old South , to everything was new and modern . The intense sense of pride and resistance to change was the South's tragic flaw that laid to its everlasting decay.

In the same vein , the Compsons in *The Sound and the Fury* exemplify the South that tries to live in the shadow of the past , by living the present through the past , symbolizing the region's intense obsession with the past and its inability to cope with the modern world and the new values . Faulkner offers a glimpse of what happens when one tries to live by the customs , codes and conducts of the past world that has been long forgotten .

The Compsons did not want to cut their connection with the past in doing so they tried to impose the morals and the ideals of the Old South in the present , yet they failed miserably in the sense that these ideals are useless and out of date in the present time . In Johnson words: “ the Compson family , being haunted by the past , represents both aspects of the effects of modernism assimilation into the modern ethos and the unwillingness to let go of the dying Southern traditions”¹ Consequently , the strong devotion , obsession and attempt to impose the past ideals on the present times lead to the corruption and decay of the same ideals and values .

The Great Depression of 1929 was another remarkable event that transformed life in the US South . Indeed , it devastated Faulkner's birthplace (the South) more than any other portion in the US . The farmers lost their farms and plantations which used to be their major source of income . During the Great Depression , the South again , confronted a serious dilemma of traditional ways and modernization . Southerners lived between two fires : under industrialism's influence , the first option was to give up the rural lifestyle or to keep on living according to the conducts of the Old South and decline sooner or later .

This quandary is masterfully highlighted by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* . The fruitful fictional portrayal that renders this situation is when the Compsons sell the last pasture of their idiot son Benjy so that to pay for Quentin's tuition at Harvard University . To quote Faulkner's words : “ we have sold Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard ”² This fictional illustration crystallizes vividly the South's trial to become modern and Northern , but at the same time its noble past . Quentin , as the representative and the embodiment of the South's old order, spirit and grandeur , commits suicide and proves that

¹ Ibid , 04

² Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* , p 79

selling the family's last pasture was useless and meaningless and so was the attempt of the South to become modern because it was too proud and insisted to live in the shadow of the past and impose the mores of the past order in the modern world. All in all, the Compsons' ignorance to cope with the reality of the new world around them and their lack of ability in reconciling with it, drag them into indifference, disintegration, self-absorption and emotional depravity. And so their life is packed with worries, sound and fury, endless hardships and ordeals, signifying nothing!

2 . The Compsons or The Family Break-up

From a sociological viewpoint, a family represents the core of an individual life. When the South is taken into account, family is perceived as one of the major social phenomena, more than this, an essence of the Southern society. Indeed, family has always been the cradle of Southern culture and Southern values, the mirror image of Southern society at large. In the antebellum South, family was generally regarded as a sacred social domain from which the identity and the worth of the individual originated. However, with the emergence of modernism, all the ethical values began to degenerate step by step, even the mores related to family as an individual's and society's life. In other words, the family which used to constitute the core of southern society became a myth.

In Faulkner's family centred-literature, Faulknerian readers are invited to discover the ravages of alcoholism and its heavy effects on the family psyche, unsuccessful marriages, irresponsible mothers, threats of siblings, incest and violence. "On a macro level family values and individual actions act as a guide towards the overarching mores of the Old South. The members of each family, the Compsons ... each contributes a different voice to Faulkner's world and collectively portray the South as a dystopian society in direct contrast to its supposed Edenic culture."¹

Indeed, in Faulkner's fiction, most of the families with a huge emphasis on the Compsons, exemplify a dysfunctional lot. To get a better understanding of the dysfunction

¹ Ibid, p06

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and degeneration of the family as a whole , one should enter the Compson family with much lucidity in the sense that “ every important family member plays a part in the dysfunction of the dysfunctional member”¹ In a like manner , it is a truth generally acknowledged when the core of the family is ruined , all the other members slowly start to follow and this results in the decay of the family as a whole which hints at the downfall of the proud , patriarchal yet dysfunctional Old South .

The Compsons ' story is a story of degeneration and downfall . The family members constitute and exemplify that degenerative process of the family thoroughly . The Compson's suffering of the loss of wealth and status gradually results in either losing touch with reality or acting against the traditional moral code of the South . Along with the phenomenon of the modern world the degradation of the aristocratic values leaves the family devoid of preserving their moral conducts necessitated by the history of the region . Yearning desperately to pursue their established standards and conducts , each member of the Compson household crystallizes the social , economical and psychological consequences of the loss and decay of the southern morality and aristocracy . Accordingly , the Compson family constitutes of an alcoholic father (Jason Compson III) , a careless mother (Caroline Compson) , and their four children who illuminate the moral decay tremendously .

Benjy² , the youngest Compson son , is portrayed as a slave of his memories due to his inability to differentiate between the past and the present . In Warren Beck words , Benjy “ is a symbol of a decadent formality and tradition”³ Like much of the South itself , he cannot stand a change in his pattern of life. He seems upset when his sister Caddy⁴ wears perfume because for him she smells different . Benjy's grief at Caddy's change when she wears the perfume can be considered as an epitome of her innocence and a powerful indicative of the sense of loss felt by southerners after the Civil War . The conflict devastated a whole society which values , among other things , the virginity of its ladies .

The eldest son , Quentin II , cannot escape change either . Due to his strong obsession with the past , he is torn between the past and its code of honour and the new

¹ Ibid , 24

² Benjy is the short form Benjamin , it is a nickname first used by Caddy. As in Caddy's situation , everybody except Mrs.Compson calls him by his nickname .

³ Warren Beck. Faulkner and the South. 1941 , p 86

⁴ Caddy is the short version of Candace , everyone except Mrs.Compson calls her by her nickname . Mrs. Compson's insistence on this matter is a result of her hatred to nicknames .

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modern mores adopted that exemplify the new South's spirit . His sister's loss of virginity is especially disturbing to him because she acted against the old code and , in total contrast to the old order . Since he cannot accept the past for what it was as he cannot accept change , Quentin is painted as unable to live a productive life in the present , having no hope for the future , consequently he commits suicide .

The last of the brothers Jason , is not concerned with the past because he rejects the Old South's ideals for the dehumanized values of the modern world . He is portrayed as successful in his business pursuits , yet he has no roots , no concept of morality , no sense of family , no love for the land or his heritage which validates the fact that he has none of the vitality of his ancestors .

Because of her headstrong nature , Caddy becomes a promiscuous woman by losing her virginity to man she does not consider marrying . Consequently , she is repudiated by her family , yet this cannot change the fact that she is placed at the centre of her brothers 'lives . Because the family lacks the passion of a mother , Caddy becomes a warm lap for her brothers , Benjy and Quentin . She takes care of Benjy and explains his needs to others . She replaces the love that is denied him by his own mother .

It is plainly evident that the domestic affairs in such a household are disappointing . The following thoughtful description by Irving Howe explores this situation vividly as such :

For the Compsons , the family is less a tie of blood than a chafe of guilt. Love can exist only as a memory of childhood , and memory only as a gall. Morality becomes a conscience-spur to the wish for death . Money is the universal solvent , replacing affection , integrity and every other sentiment beyond calculation . All this , of course , is notoriously morbid and excessive , as literature often is ; but morbidity and excess apart , the world of the Compsons should not be too difficult for us to acknowledge .¹

In the light of the above statements , it becomes obvious that the Compson's understanding of morality is one of the aspects that lead to their degeneration . It was unpleasantly difficult for Faulkner to paint the debasement which every member of the

¹ Irving Howe . William Faulkner : His World and His Work . Vintage Books .New York . 1962 , p 48

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Compson household displays . Therefore, he conveyed the narration of the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury* to the three Compson sons who exemplify moral decline in different ways .

Correspondingly , Faulkner's rendition of degeneration through the people who experience it in person has a remarkable contribution in the formation of his mythical presentation . As his legendary exposition depends largely upon the theme of repetition . Faulkner exposes the Compsons' tragic story of decadence through multiple perspectives. Thus , the same story , told again and again , becomes one of a legend . Similarly , the narration of the last section serves Faulkner's design of mythical presentation . Although generally referred to as Dilsey's section , it constitutes of Faulkner's narration in the third person . In utilizing the third person singular , Faulkner provides the reader with an objective point of view to the Compson household and the tragedy that they undergo .

After a series of personal demonstrations , Faulkner's rendition appears as an impartial criticism to the whole of what constitutes the Compsons , and the exhausted Southern aristocracy which they represent . As a result , Faulkner's preference of making the characters narrate their experience , and the authorial voice serve his portrayal in terms of his desire to remain distant to the critique of his own history . Likewise , he idea of repetition enables the narrative to acquire a legendary attribute , thus , becoming a crucial element in Faulkner's mythical presentation .

...Tomorrow , and to-morrow , and to-morrow ,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day ,
To that last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death , Out , out ,brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow ; a poor player ,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage ,
And then is hear no more : it is a tale

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Told by an idiot , full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing .¹

Accordingly , the Compson family break up can be handled in different terms among which one can note their inability to cope with the modern values by accepting the exhaustion of their pre-Civil War notability . As stated in the quotation from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* , the Compsons' present life is nothing but a shadow of its past. Their ineffectiveness in reconciling with the new state of the South and their disregard of the exhaustion of the once prominent Southern morality drag them into indifference , self-absorption and emotional deviation . To this end , life becomes an endless ordeal 'signifying nothing' .

In discussing the family split up as highlighted in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Cleanth Brooks asserts that setting the novel in the South is crucial because “ the breakdown of a family can be exhibited more poignantly and significantly in a society which is old-fashioned and in which the family is still at the centre.”² The Compsons , just like the Faulkners , were one of the old families in which the old traditions had been preserved whereby the mother stayed at home to run the house and to take care of the children even though the real work was done by the black servants that she was supposed to direct , and the men went out to earn the living so that they could take care of the women in the manner to which they had grown accustomed .

But somewhere along the line , the tradition of loving and caring for children and teaching them to communicate and work together in a functional manner gets lost as the family degenerates into dysfunctional modes of relating to one another . To prevent that tradition from dying , the women in the family , the women in the family have to take an active role in which they give the example of healthful communication and through which they direct the children to relationships that will enable them to carry on in the future generations. When that dysfunction progresses far enough , the family members destroy one another even when they try to keep up the outer appearance of the traditional Southern family.

¹ From William Shakespeare's « Macbeth » in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* , the edition of The Shakespeare Head Press Oxford , published by Barnes and Noble , Inc , 1994, 882.

² Cleanth Brooks , op cit , p341

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Thus, the Compsons of *The Sound and the Fury* represent the last of a degenerating nuclear family, a family that does not understand the significant importance of communication. Their inability to communicate in a functional mode affects family interaction and the family's ability to form functional relationships with the larger community. The family falls apart even though the mother is present because her failure to interact with her children and her attitudes permit and even precipitate the events that occur, a family that dies from its own lack of familial structure, more particularly the lack of maternal parenting role.

It is of essence to note that if the Compsons were united as true family and not just a group of contradicting people unable to love one another, they may have balanced the opposing tendencies, and thus prevent the split up. But since each member of the family household preferred to live in his/her own private world which is built upon different principles and mores, lacking both love and humanity, no other option remained but destruction. The members of the Compson household will be examined in terms of the consequences of their inability to reconcile with the previously mentioned devastation.

In sum, *The Sound and the Fury* can be considered as a comprehensive epitome of Faulkner's devotedness to the moral conducts of Southern aristocracy and morality. As stated formerly, Faulkner in this novel, paints the life and the world of the Compson family, the world which is in Brown's words "a deteriorating world, represented symbolically by Faulkner in the physical and spiritual maladies of its inhabitants"¹ The novel's portrayal of the Compson's moral decay, in a broader context, stands for the decadence of the grandiose Old South. Indeed, with its fictive setting and multiple perspectives, *The Sound and the Fury* can be regarded as one of Faulkner's masterpieces which paint his own history as a legend.

3.The Source of all Disorder

3.1. Paternal Inadequacy : Mr. Compson

¹ Brown May Cameron . The Language of Chaos: Quentin Compson in The Sound and the Fury" American Literature 51.4(1980) p 544

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As the head of the family , Jason Compson III who is also referred to as Mr. Compson is supposed to be the sanest member of the family providing a source of wisdom to his whole family. Pride and protecting the family honour are one of the pertinent features that the Southern aristocracy was established upon and which should normally be associated with the head of the family who is of an aristocratic decent . However , in total contrast to the weighty effect of such characteristics Mr. Compson appears to be a totally insignificant and ineffective figure within the family household .

Jason Compson had the misfortune of having a whining self-centred woman as a wife. To the many problems that confronted the Compson family , he found no support or cooperation from his wife . Caroline Compson – Mr. Compson’s wife – was only interested in the social status of her family , the Bascombs . It is mainly because of his uncaring wife that Mr. Compson gradually turns into a nihilist .

David Minter provides a genuine description on Mr. Compson , he paints him as “a weak , nihilistic alcoholic who toys with the emotions of his children”¹ Instead of providing money and care for his family , he spends his days indulging in whiskey and cigars. Faulkner portrays the head of the family as an impotent nihilistic alcoholic who assumes with the feelings and demands of his children . He is unsuccessful at displaying the tenderness and benevolence he feels for them .

In the same regard , Irving Malin , in his book *William Faulkner : An Interpretation* , he asserts that “ he (Mr. Compson) lives intellectually according to an inflexible pattern which permits him to sit all day drinking , reading Horace and Livy , and writing better bitter elegies about his fellow townspeople”² the following descriptive words of Mr. Compson to his son Quentin highlights his nihilism and failure as a father :

Father said a man is the sum of misfortunes . One day you’d think misfortune would get tired , but then time is your misfortune Father said. A

¹ David Minter , op cit , p 383

² Malin Irving , William Faulkner : An Interpretation .Gordian Press .New York .1972 , p16

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gull on an invisible wire attached through space dragged . You carry the symbol of your frustration into eternity ”¹

And once more ,

Man is the sum of his climatic experiences Father said. Man is the sum of what have you . A problem in impure properties carried tediously to an unvarying nil : statement of dust and desire .²

The core of this argument is that man is what he *was* , not what he *is* , and the logical conclusion if the past becomes intolerable is that life itself cannot be endured . This absorption in the past is natural to a person who like Mr. Compson and his son Quentin belong to a society which has lost its original set of values , has romanticized its past .

The excerpt is an instance of the life experience Mr. Compson acquired throughout years . Moreover , Quentin inherits his self-conscious despair from a cynical father . The later advises Quentin’s complete surrender to time , or rather to the mechanical sequence of events symbolized by the ticking of his grandfather’s watch . The following statements as highlighted in *The Sound and the Fury* endorse this point vividly .

Quentin , I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire ; it’s rather excruciating-ly that you will use it to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted his or his father’s . I give it to you not that you may remember time , but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it .³

As a Further matter , Mr. Compson appears only in a few scenes , but his presence is felt by all the characters . Quentin appears to be strongly affected by his father . Unaware of the sensitive nature of his son , Mr. Compson brings out his ideas about the displacement of the self within time with regard to sorrow and disappointment. As a result of his

¹ The Sound and the Fury , p 129

² Ibid

³ Ibid , 48

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ineffectiveness as inconsiderate father , he drags his son into a serious physical and emotional experience of dispossession . Again , the quotation mentioned above seems to be a thoughtful depiction of Mr. Compson's nihilism .

Even though by profession a lawyer , Mr. Compson is not a man of profession at all, he is a man of philosophy . His cynical attitude leads him to an understanding of time as the primal concept which ruins man's life . As long as the concept of time exists , man is doomed to a successive experience of misfortunes . Succumbed to fatalism , he believes that there is nothing he can do to change the course of the events which signal the disintegration of his family . His recurrent words about wasting time in fighting because “ no battle is never won”¹ and “ that victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools”² contribute enormously to the disarranged psyche of his oldest son – Quentin - . Therefore , it can be argued that the main responsibility of Quentin's decadence and his corrupted mind lies on the shoulders of his father : Mr. Compson .

It is plainly evident that Mr Compson's nihilism is an attempt to escape from the struggle of getting over the disturbance that surrounds his household . In the meanwhile , it can be considered as a vivid attempt to preserve the honour of his family by sending Quentin to Harvard for a prestigious education . By giving up a vast considerable amount of land , Mr. Compson risks the welfare of his family so that Quentin can exemplify the prominence he has failed to conserve . Nevertheless , Quentin's realization of his father's ignorance and indifference to the ideals of Southern aristocracy drags him into a process of emotional conflict . Cleanth Brooks provides a comprehensive description of Mr. Compson's strong influence on Quentin as such :

Quentin was apparently very close to his father and the influence of his father on him was obviously very powerful . The whole of Quentin section is saturated with what “Father said ” and with references to comparisons that Father used and observations about life that Father made . Though his father seems to have counselled acquiescence in the meaninglessness of existence , it is plain that it was from him that Quentin derived his high notion of the claims of honour³

¹ Ibid

² Ibid

³ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , p336

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Moreover, distressed by his sister's promiscuity, Quentin seeks remedy in his father's life experience. Yet Mr. Compson's acknowledgment of his daughter's disgrace as a natural flaw nurtures Quentin's suicidal feelings. According to Quentin's understanding of morality, it is unacceptable that his father "... loves people through their shortcomings."¹ Mr. Compson believes strongly in the assumption that Quentin's discomfort in this matter is the outcome of his own virginity; and with his nihilistic approach, he regards the concept as trivial. Quentin's memory flow in the following quotation which exemplifies the clash between the father and son about the notion of virginity:

Father said it's because you are a virgin: don't you see? Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting you not Caddy and I said That's just words and he said So is virginity and I said you don't know. You can't know and he said Yes.²

Indeed, by retreating into nihilism Mr. Compson remains indifferent to his daughter's promiscuity. However, it is significant that the former bearer of the moral values of Southern aristocracy turns out to be an impotent man who regards the concept of virginity only as 'words'. A good clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Richard Gray, according to him, the reason for Mr. Compson's transformation is a consequence of his disappointment about women:

Mr. Compson is a disillusioned idealist, and one of the things he has clearly become disillusioned with is women – or rather, Woman. Having subscribed once to the cult of Southern Womanhood, according to which some women at least are regarded as 'virgins', he has now come to see them all as contaminated by sexuality and 'periodical filth' (159): as all 'whores' with 'a natural affinity for evil'. (119). 'No woman is to be trusted' Woman once, in other words idealized her, and that, when she turned out to be real rather than ideal, he felt humiliated and betrayed.³

¹ Ibid, 124

² Ibid, 143

³ Gray Richard, *The Life of William Faulkner*. Blackwell Publishers Inc. Massachusetts. 1996, p45

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With the decline of the Southern aristocracy and morality , Mr. Compson comes to terms with the insignificance and futility of associating the attributes of purity and virginity to women . As his wife , the woman he has idealized throughout years fails to maintain her dignity and perseverance , Mr. Compson becomes aware of the fact that there is no ideal woman . Nevertheless , as a result of his strong devotion and deep commitment to the traditional moral and ethical values and principles , Quentin is unable to reconcile with his father's cynical approach to women . By uttering such insensitive words which are in complete contrast with the traditional Southern values of virtue and purity , Mr. Compson unconsciously drags his son into suicide . the following expressive words by Richard P. Adams explores masterfully this situation as follows :

His [Faulkner's] most completely defeated characters , such as Quentin Compson ... , go down because they are immediately opposed to life . They try to find something unchanging to stand on , motionless in the midst of change . But motion sweeps them on so relentlessly that their only escape in one or another kind of suicide .¹

In the same strain , the crucial and only thing , according to Quentin , to depend upon was his father's unflinching dignity . However , Mr. Compson's weakness destroys Quentin's faith in his ideal of preserving the moral integrity of his family . As he still lives in the shadow of the past and can not go beyond it , , it is dreadfully difficult for him to confront the degeneration of the present . Quentin's realization of the impossibility of fulfilling or saving the Southern tradition renders his suicide inevitable . John, T Mathews clarifies through his artful description Quentin's motives for suicide as follows :

This son of the South [Quentin] (he never becomes a son of Harvard) cannot escape the conviction that the past is nothing but catastrophe – the catastrophe of the ... aristocratic decline in the New South , and the humiliation of a ruined family . Like so many other Southerners , Quentin sees nothing but a legacy of loss . His suicide suggests that he refuses to accept the repetition of that past in his future .²

¹ Adams Richard Perrill . Faulkner : Myth and Motion. Princeton Press .New Jersey .1968 , p 13

² John T Mathews , op cit , p 62

In the light of the above quotation , it can be argued that the legacy of loss that Quentin inherits from his father deprives him of the resolution which is necessary to cope with the decay of the Southern morality . As a matter of fact , towards the end of his memory flow , it becomes obvious that Quentin is paralyzed by the past . To this end , Mr. Compson's endeavour to preserve the notability of his family by sending Quentin to Harvard is pointless. Mr. Compson's impotence as the head of the family and his death as a result of his excessive alcoholism can be considered as the major reasons that were at the origin of the family deterioration in terms of morality , wealth and status . Instead of guiding the family during its hour of crisis , the father takes up a completely indifferent attitude and thus paves the way for his family's ruin . And so , he has failed his children and has lost complete control of the family situation . He is a beaten man and completely worn down . It is his defeat that spells the ruin of the Compson family .

3.2. Maternal Betrayal : Mrs. Compson

The character through which Faulkner could paint the frightful reality of the Compson break up is Caroline Compson , the mother . As a mother , Mrs. Compson is a puzzle . There is a temptation for the reader to vacillate about where Mrs. Compson belongs. First and foremost , it is of essence to note that Mrs. Compson's selfishness and negligence contribute enormously to the family degeneration. Her egocentricity withdraws her from children's affairs more particularly at time of urgency . More than this , Mrs. Compson's emotional absence is the genesis for her children's fall. According to Brooks , she is “ the curse upon Quentin and the rest of the Compsons”¹

Moreover , mothers whether Southern or otherwise , are supposed to be a crucial family member . Although every member of a family is important , the mother who nurtures and cares for others is irreplaceable . A Southern mother especially is “ the mistress of

¹ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , 292

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plantation ... the lady the bountiful , caring for the wants and needs of her family.”¹ On the other hand , Weinstein asserts that “ mothers are supposed to be sacred servants.”²

In Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* , the mother is everything but sacred and caring, a true disgrace for all mothers . She is trapped in her downfall and she ends up by dragging the whole family to it . Weinstein provides a genuine portrayal of Mrs. Compson saying that she “ is a socially constructed figure”³ Her life can be split up in two periods : the premarital period and the post marital period . In the latter period , she keeps hiding from her failure as a woman , a wife and a mother . Weinstein endorses this point in his following words :

These are the only roles Mrs. Compson can play – premarital coquetry or post maternal grief. Her abandonment of her children emerges here as saturated in the rituals and assumptions of her own virginal past . Between her childless adolescence and her child-complicated middle age no other viable script has become available to her .⁴

Alongside the head of the family , Mrs. Compson is supposed to be a strong pillar upon which the family is established , capable of taking care of her children and providing help when necessary . Unfortunately , she is a “ cold , self-involved woman who expands her energies worrying her ailments , complaining about her life , and clinging to her notions of respectability”⁵ Constantly whining and self-pitying , she is not even able to fulfil her role as a mother within the Compson household. She often asks questions such as “ what have I done to have been given children like these?”⁶ . It becomes clear that Mrs. Compson is deeply trapped in the family to which she does not belong .

Mrs. Compson deliberately blinds herself to reality by separating herself from her children . Quentin best describes his mother’s physical presence as a spiritual absence when he recalls himself as a young child stumbling in darkness to try to see a family photograph . As he studies the photo , he finds in it that “ the dungeon was Mother herself ... and [he and

¹ Richard King , op cit , 253

² Weinstein , Philip. “If I Could Say Mother : Constructing the Unsayable About Faulknerian Maternity”. Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations : William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* , Ed Harold Bloom , New York: InfoBase Publishing .2008 p71

³ Ibid ,73

⁴ Ibid , 68

⁵ David Minter , op cit , 383

⁶ *The Sound and the Fury* , p65

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his siblings were] lost somewhere below [Mrs. Compson] without even a ray of light”¹ She traps her children , as evidenced in her “ huge bunch of rusted keys” that she carries “ on an iron ring like a medieval jailer’s”²

Out of all her children , she only cares for her son Jason . According to her , Jason is the only one that takes after her side of the family , the Bascombs . She is unable to show any motherly love for any of her children except Jason , who in the end turns out to be the worst of all her other children with a main emphasis on Benjy embody for her the punishment for her past sins. She provides no maternal love for her children , leaving them in the hands of the servants while she spends days in her room suffering from an imaginary illness . It is for this reason , that Caddy is meant to grow up early , playing the mother figure and more importantly providing care and love for the whole family in general and her disabled brother ‘Benjy’ in particular .

Lost in a haze of hypochondria , she constantly retires to bed claiming that she is terribly ill. Her illness is a pretext to escape or reject her responsibilities . This highlights vividly her diseased personality and inability to interact with reality . Moreover , she is unable to grant love , sympathy or warmth for her posterity ; therefore , she is portrayed as a present character yet an absent mother . From the outset , her marriage seems to be a total failure since it was not strongly based on mutual understanding and love , and so her duty to bring up dependable and honest offspring is neglected .

Correspondingly , Mrs. Compson retreats into self-absorption , just like her husband takes shelter in nihilism and fatalism , she acts as if nothing extraordinary is going around her because she “cannot bear the prospect that her world will no longer behave according to the traditions of leisure and authority she thinks are her due”³ And so , she isolates herself in her *ivory tower*⁴ so that not to get involved in the familial issues that her family undergoes and considers the tragedy of her family as a direct outcome of the damnation they are all expected to . No wonder , such features prove Mrs. Compson to be a cold and careless mother . She incapable to fulfil the responsibilities of motherhood , depends wholeheartedly upon her black servant for the care of her own children along with the order of an entire household .

¹ Ibid , 109-110

² Ibid , 175

³ Matthews John , op cit , 39

⁴ The term *ivory tower* originates from the Christian tradition . It is a symbol of gentle purity which also connotes isolation .

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Even Cleanth Brooks asserts that Mr. Compson is an important factor in the family's disintegration because he is weak , defeated man , a man who loves his children but who, at the same time , does not know what to do with them , he too puts the real burden of blame upon Mrs. Compson as he renders his view of Mrs. Compson in his following expressive words :

The basic cause of the break up of the Compson family ... is the cold and self-centred mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family , the Boscombs , who feels the birth of an idiot son as a kind personal affront , who spoils and corrupts her favourite son , and who withholds any real love and affection from her other children and her husband . Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships .¹

As highlighted in the quotation , Mrs. Compson deprives her children from any maternal love due to her excessive selfishness and negligence . Instead of showing concern to her children's needs , she focuses her entire attention on her strong obsession with the family name and pride . Such a preoccupation is strongly pervasive in her endeavour to change the name of her mentally retarded son 'Benjy'. Because she considers her own blood to be distinguished and in order to be associated with her family's prestige , she names her youngest child after her brother Maury Bascomb . However , as a result of the fact that the boy's retardation is a handicap for him being an heir for her family , she therefore changes the name of her son from Maury to Benjamin at the age of five .

In a like manner , Sally R. Page not only agrees with Brooks about Mrs. Compson , yet she puts it more strongly “ the Compson family is dying because Mrs. Compson is incapable of loving or caring for her children she is a total failure as a mother”² Even though, one person ordinarily cannot or does bring about the disintegration of a family by him or herself , still the failure of a mother to take charge of guiding familial relationships and of teaching family members to communicate functionally has to weigh heavily in the lives of the children .

¹ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , 334

² Sally R. Page , op cit , p 47

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Mrs. Compson's misconception of herself as a representative of Southern gentility drags both herself and her family into a series of losses which cause her family's dissolution . Her lack of self-criticism estranges her from harsh facts of life , consequently , she becomes alienated to everything that goes around her . Mrs. Compson's self centeredness affects Quentin the most . To illustrate this , Quentin appears as the only son who voices this experience of his mother's absence as he says " If I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother " ¹ In the light of these expressive words , it is obvious that Quentin's lack of maternal love is a consequence of Mrs. Compson's absent presence . Her detached manners causes her to ignore the fact that the suicide of her son Quentin is a direct result of her absence . The following words explore this matter artfully as such :

I don't know what reason did Quentin have ? Under God's heaven what reason did he have ? It can't be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever God is , He would not permit that . I'am a lady . You might not believe that from my offspring [Caddy] , but I am .²

In the same regard , it is apparent that Mrs. Compson believes that she is under God's special protection . However , what needs to be said is that this misapprehension brings about nothing but the figure of a feeble and an inert woman . Even the tragic death of her son does not seem to make her realize her failure as a mother . To this end , she can do nothing but lament for the losses her family encounters .

By the same token , it is worthy of note that one of Mrs. Compson's sensitive areas lies in her own background and the social position of her family. Above all , she appears to have no life story or no happy memories after she marries Jason Compson and after they consume the marriage . Indeed , "the picture of Mrs. Compson that emerges is of a woman whose life ceased to be narratable after her entry into marriage and its sexual consequences."³ It is like everything she believed in as a young girl has gone with the wind and she gives into

¹ Ibid , 213

² Ibid , 374

³ Weinstein , op cit , 69

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the dimensional and reputation-obsessed life which serves as a compensation for her lost status as a Bascomb. After she believed her children , she herself begins “ acting like a child exacting from her children the sustenance she should be offering them”¹ she feels trapped in a life with the Compsons whereby she sees all of her physically or psychologically deformed children as a curse except for Jason because he is more on a Bascomb side .

As highlighted previously , it can be seen that Mrs. Compson’s feelings and emotions are strictly limited to one side of the family , namely the Bascombs ; whereas the Compsons do not seem to deserve her time . Indeed , she only cares for the Bascomb side of which she is very proud . “ Her brother Maury seems to serve as her way of remaining a Bascomb , of refusing to consummate her entry to the Compsonhood”². And that is one of the powerful reasons she clings to Jason so tightly .

There is a fictional instance that crystallizes vividly this situation where Caroline Compson asserts “ You [Jason] are my only hope , she [Caroline] says every night I thank God for you ... Thank God if he had to be taken too , it is you left me and not Quentin”³. Another noteworthy fictional illustration that endorses this point when Mr. Compson makes gentle but pointed fun of her brother Maury Bascomb : “ Maury says he’s going to shoot the scoundrel ... I told him not to mention it to Patterson before hand” , and in response to Quentin’s query about whom Maury is going to be shoot , Mr. Compson replies with an irrelevant or distracting response , which he hopes will put an end to the discussion : “ No body ... I don’t own a pistol”⁴ At this point , Mrs. Compson begins to cry and to upbraid Mr. Compson for making fun of her brother in front of the children. In spite of Mr. Compson’s assurances that he was joking , Mrs. Compson responds by defending her family’s social status “ my people are every bit as well born as yours”⁵

Furthermore , Caroline Compson wishes to return to her past , thereby making her present nothing more than a distortion of her past . Self-absorbed, she is portrayed as more concerned about herself rather than the well being of her children . To illustrate this , when Dilsey (the black servant) returns home from her Easter service , Caroline asks her ‘ did you

¹ Ibid , 69

² Ibid

³ *The Sound and the Fury* , p70

⁴ Ibid , 33

⁵ Ibid

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find [the suicide note] ?¹ She arrogantly declares that her granddaughter should “ at least ... have enough consideration to leave a note [because] even Quentin did that”² Obviously missing the essential problem that people are dead , Mrs. Compson appears here to be more concerned with the formalities of how she perceives one should go about conducting one’s suicide .

Caroline’s main problem seems to be the binary environment in which she was brought up where she was taught that “ there is no halfway ground that a woman is either a lady or not”³ That kind of nurture completely damages her notion of purity . After her virginity is taken , she feels like she has lost herself together with it . As she perceives sex as a vile and degrading act of violation of a woman’s dignity and sexual purity . This can justify the reason why she acts so dramatically when Caddy kisses a boy and even worse , when she loses her virginity . Remaining a virgin is important to Mrs. Compson because it suggests to her that she remains in the past and has never become anything than a Bascomb .

In a similar vein , It is Jason who informs his mother about Caddy’s scene of kissing her lover . And so , it is worthy of note to note that Mrs. Compson’s neurotic exaggeration of the act that humiliates Caddy and soon she does things that are much worse than kissing . Had she been a wise mother who should be concerned by the well-being of her daughter , she would have chided her daughter , by helping her to reform her ways and taken her across the right path . In doing so , she would thereby have averted the tragedy that befell the Southern family . To this end , it can be said that if Mrs. Compsons had taken a sympathetic attitude towards Caddy and the other members of her family , perhaps the course of the Compson family may have taken a very different turn .

Accordingly , Mrs. Compson silences the name of her only daughter , the one who reminds Caroline Compson of the child bearing path she took , but would like to forget . Mrs. Compson tells her husband and Dilsey that baby Quentin “ must never know. She must never learn [Caddy’s] name ... I forbid you ever to speak that name in [Quentin’s] hearing. If [Quentin] could grow up never to know that she had a mother , I would thank God⁴ In

¹ Ibid , 186

² Ibid

³ Weinstein , op cit , 69

⁴ Ibid ,125

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negating Quentin's mother , Caroline suppresses her past and frees herself from being a mother and a grandmother .

Metaphorically , Mrs. Compson is dead to her children . They notice on several occasions that “ mother's sick again”¹ Throughout the novel , the individual described as ‘sick’ is dead figuratively or literally . By way of illustration , on the night of their grandmother's death , Caddy says “Damuddy was sick”² Again , when Benjy divines that his father has died he thinks “ Father was sick there”³ To this end , it can be argued that the Compson children are forced to look elsewhere to find a surrogate mother .

Most of Mrs. Compson's actions can fundamentally be interpreted by a strong need for attention and pity because that is the only way she can manage to get anything from her children . She never manages uniting them with them on any significant level, and so forcing them , at least , feigning affection is good enough for her at this point . In the same strain , Jason recounts a scene at one point where Mrs. Compson catches Caddy kissing a boy when she is fifteen and spends days in mourning clothes because of it . She goes through fits of dramatics when things do not please her mental image of how things should be , and she props herself up on the second floor of their home and tries to manage a household like there is not a family inside of it .

An essential reality about Mrs. Compson while attempting to unveil her position in society relative to other women is that because her place as a Southern woman in a changing economic system , from the Old South's emphasis on social class , to which she desperately clings , to the New South's insistence on capitalism , investments and making money , she is bound to the place that society assigned her . To this end , she appears to be powerless in a patriarchal system , and powerless is not a place where Mrs. Compson is comfortable being . All things considered , it can be argued that Mrs. Compson is torn between a delicate divide of the Old South and the New South , more than this , she is struggling to comprehend her own identity just like her children are .

In pursuit of this aim , she might victimize her family and consistently victimize herself as well , but it is quite possible that she is just as much a victim of the times caught

¹Ibid , 46

² Ibid , 17

³ Ibid ,22

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between her own expectations for her life and the ideal image of a Southern *belle* mentality that she is unable to live up to . The term Southern *belle* is derived from the French word *belle* (beautiful) . As it is an archetype for an upper class Southern woman.

The ideal of the Southern *belle* came into existence in the 1930s , it was associated with much of positive and magnificent attributes exemplifying a typical Southern lady , wife , mother and daughter . A Southern *belle* was not only distinguished by her beauty but more particularly by a set of virtues , amongst the most noteworthy being honesty , purity , modesty , tenderness , honouring and protecting the family's name and a total devotion to her husband and family .

It is of essence to state that a Southern *belle* reflected an image of a somehow perfect Southern woman , whereby weakness is blended with fragility , and by possessing a huge amount of bravery and emotional strength to face the hardships of everyday life . In *The Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture* , Anne Goodwyn Jones illuminates the duties of a Southern belle in her following descriptive words :

Satisfying her husband , raising her children , meeting the demands of her family's social position , and sustaining the ideals of the South . Her strength in manners and morals is contingent .However , upon her submission to the source – God , the patriarchal church and her husband – and upon her staying out of the public life , where she might interfere in their formulation.¹

In a like manner , during and after the Civil War , Southern women attitudes and expectations changed tremendously . It is worthy of note to state that it is also the time they started to act against their ideal image . Indeed , the pre-eminent features that used to identify them as Southern belles began to fade away , bit by bit and step by step . Faulkner , as a product of his hometown , culture and circumstances , etched artfully and smartly this mode of thinking and pattern of behaviour in his fiction , more particularly in his novel *The Sound*

¹ Jones Anne Goodwyn . Belles and Ladies . Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture . The University of Carolina Press. USA. 1989 , p 1527-1528

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and the Fury through a successful selection of a heroine who crystallizes thoroughly what has been said. Correspondingly, in this literary production, the Southern etiquette appears to be attributed to Mrs. Compson in various shapes and forms. As a fruit of Faulkner's thoughtful imagination, Mrs. Compson possessed a touch of deterioration and decay.

Out of the three heroines from *The Sound and the Fury* only Mrs. Compson can compete to find herself among the Southern belles. The former is ready to do everything to remain a true Southern ideal. Her understanding of the concept of the Southern *belle* is quite limited. Mrs. Compson failed as a wife and a mother. Her feelings are strictly limited to one side of her family, namely the Bascombs. More than this, she shows no love for her children. A true lady embodied the ideals of the South, and was thus hospitable and graceful, Mrs. Compson is far from an image of a Southern *belle*.

The above stated brief analysis illuminates that Mrs. Compson is an epitome of a decaying Southern woman and mother. As she becomes the victim of the social roles and the environment in which she was brought up, Weinstein gives a comprehensive rendition of Mrs. Compson's downfall as a mother and also of *mothers* in Faulkner's fiction in general: "Selfless, unwavering care and concern: this is exactly what these mothers lack. It is also what they are posited by the culture as supposed to possess, and what they are excoriated for not possessing"¹ In addition to this, Weinstein argues that Caroline Compson is:

deformed by her social training –training shaped by class and race to the requirements of virginity – abandons her own flesh and blood upon the loss of that virginity. She has outlived her image of herself. Simultaneously rushing forward to death and backward to childhood, she repeats herself and takes to black.²

In light of what has been stated formerly, the Compson's weakening and eventual dissolution can unconditionally be associated with Mrs. Compson's coldness, aloofness and self-absorption. It is due to such defects, she never manages to value the people who truly who deserve appraisal. Her appreciation of Jason though he is untrustworthy and materialist man accelerates the family's ethical degeneration. Nonetheless, her disregard of the mentally retarded Benjy, her indifference to Quentin and finally her repudiation of Caddy bring about

¹ Weinstein, op cit, 70-71

² Ibid

the indispensable decay of the family . Ultimately , Mrs. Compson's last image is that of a mother whose children lose her before she ever allows them to possess her .

4 . Caddy : A Symbol of a Fallen Southern Belle

Caddy Compson was one of Faulkner's favourite characters . In speaking of her , he said : “ to me she was the beautiful one , she was my heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book about ... to try to tell , try to draw the picture of Caddy.”¹ Caddy Compson , a child at the beginning of the novel and an absent mother at the end , serves as a mother figure especially for Benjy . She is portrayed as the central character of the novel even though she never tells her story , yet it is told from everybody else's perspective. To this end , the reader cannot have a clear-cut image what kind of a character she is . Her life and her actions form a skeleton around which the lives of everybody else resolve .

The Compson brothers turn to their sister , Caddy , to fill the mother role vacated by Mrs Compson . Although it is Caddy to whom they long to return , she herself is without definition . In a novel concerned with a search for identity and the hunt for wholeness , it is worthy of note that the main character is indefinable . Above all , Caddy is Faulkner's heart's darling , the one whose story he wrote “five separate times trying to rid [him]self of the dream which would continue to anguish [him] until [he]did. ”² He used the tools which seemed , according him , the proper tools to voice Caddy's reality by painting a vivid image of her. The tools Faulkner utilized and he deepened upon ; however , were words , which can never fully “match the dream”³ of the writer's imagination .

Caddy's voice is never directly heard in the novel . We hear her voice as it is recalled by others ; what we do not get is Caddy telling her own version of what is happening. She is simultaneously meaningful and meaningless , present and absent , alive and dead , child and mother , language and silence , is and was . The unifying force of the novel is Caddy's perceived sin , which the ‘muddy bottom of her drawers’ symbolizes ; the sin is the initial loss that each brother struggles to understand and interpret .

¹ Gwyn and Blotner , op cit , p06

² Ibid , 232

³ Ibid , 237

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Thoughtful insights are pervasive in Faulkner's introduction to *The Sound and the Fury* where he crystallizes the loss upon which the novel is based . In discussing his initial ideas for the text , he writes : “ I who had never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy , set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl”¹ . In the same respect , Faulkner creates a body of fiction to compensate for his loss opportunity to have a sister . Since he never had a sister , Caddy remains outside of his reach and he creates what he perceives a sister is . Following the same pattern , Caddy is not an individual character , but a projection of other characters ' interpretations . In this regard , she is similar to her daughter Miss Quentin who declares that “ whatever I do it's [Jason's] fault ... if I'm bad , it's because I had to be , [Jason] made me”² To this end , it is obvious that Miss Quentin negates her individuality by making herself a pawn of Jason .

Furthermore , just like *The Sound and the Fury* requires the reader to learn how to read again , it challenges the traditional understanding of how a reader knows a character . The novel is Faulkner's attempt to know Caddy and so he offers a jumbled array of perspectives from which to see and analyze her . In essence , throughout the novel , the reader meets three different Caddy's : Benjy's , Quentin's and Jason's . A genuine way to point up this idea is to examine *The Return of the Repressed* by Doreen Fowler ; whereby he reproduces a segment of an early draft of Faulkner's original introduction , Faulkner affirms that :

I could be in it , the brother and the father both . But one brother could not contain all that I could feel toward [Caddy] . I gave her three : Quentin who loved her as a lover would , Jason who loved her with the same hatred of jealous and outraged of a father , and Benjy who loved her with the complete mindlessness of a child .³

Caddy means something different to Faulkner and each Compson . Faulkner searched for Caddy through writing *The Sound and the Fury* . In describing the emotion he felt while composing the novel , Faulkner writes that it was an emotion “ definite and physical and yet nebulous to describe that ecstasy , that eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which he yet unmarred sheet beneath my hand held inviolate and unfailling , waiting for release”⁴ Caddy is herself nebulous to describe and the reader remains waiting for her release

¹ Gwyn and Blotner , op cit , 06

² *The Sound and the Fury* , p 162

³ Fowler Doreen . *The Return of the Repressed* . University of Virginia Press .Charlottesville . 1997, p46

⁴ *Ibid* , 226

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, but never sees her . As the reader attempts to make sense of Caddy , he/she figures out that Caddy is portrayed through sensory language . Benjy feels Caddy's warmth through fire . While Quentin sees Caddy in water . Benjy finds her in the bright flickering flames of the Compson fireplace . The flames calm Benjy and allow him to relive some peaceful moments with Caddy.

Throughout the novel , Caddy as a young girl is portrayed as happy , playful and enjoys spending carefree days with her brothers . However , she does not appear to enjoy her childhood for a long time in the sense that she is the only girl in the Compson household . Since Mrs. Compson is a present absent mother who is never there to take proper care of her children , Caddy has to take over this role . David Minter endorses this point vividly , he asserts : “ Like Benjy , Quentin and Jason also turn towards Caddy , seeking to find in her some way of meeting needs ignored or thwarted by their parents”¹

By the same token , the fact that Caddy has to grow up faster and as she never experiences a great deal of love inside her family make her eager to find love elsewhere . Because of her headstrong nature , she starts having little love affairs very soon which lead to her loss of virginity as she becomes a promiscuous woman . Her little sexual games are a real frustration to her family and others and make their lives difficult . Quentin and Benjy are terribly affected by her loss of virginity , it can be said that it was the life changing experience for them , more than it was for Caddy . As a result , Caddy is repudiated both by her husband and her mother because of her illegitimate child . John Mathews gives a comprehensive description of Caddy's situations as follows :

Caddy does refuse to obey the dictates of her community . She rejects the patriarchy's insistence on virginity as a condition for proper marriage ability. She follows her own desires , decides against fulfilling the role of mother [by abandoning her daughter] and flaunts her ability to make money independently .²

¹ David Minter , op cit , 383

² John .T Mathews , op cit , 92

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In *The Sound and the Fury* , Caddy Compson as the only female descendent of a declined aristocratic family is quite burdened with the myth of the Southern lady . Caddy embodies some typical qualities of a Southern *belle* in the sense that she is tender , soft and caring , especially for her brothers for whom she symbolizes the mother figure they always lacked . Regrettably , she fails in trying to break free from the conventions and social conducts imposed by the Southern society and her family , with a main emphasis on her mother . Indeed , contrary to Mrs. Compson's example of the traditional and aristocrat woman, her daughter Caddy is a total deviation from the established and idealized southern female roles .

In a similar vein , Caddy's defiance in accepting the conventional norms of the Southern society upsets all the family members . There are many fictional instances that exemplify her extramarital relationships . By way of illustration , her mother's reaction to her kissing a boy described by Jason :

like that time when she [mother] happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she went around the house in a black dress and veil and even Father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying how her little daughter was dead.¹

As stated formerly , in the American South , and according to the Compsons who are of a well-born decent , “ female ‘ honour’ , that is chastity is a ‘verifier of family status’ , Caddy is an emblem to their status and an economic asset”² All of this is called into question when Caddy engages in promiscuous sexual Caddy becomes nothing but a fallen woman who is not allowed to visit her parental home and the very mention of her name is strictly forbidden . As she is not allowed neither to see nor to raise her daughter .

Correspondingly , Faulkner's portrayal of Caddy's deviation and promiscuity is a genuine indication of his realization of the radical changes that the Southern aristocracy is going through . Caddy's outlook to a new way of life is not only a source of distress for the family , yet also a courageous act to challenge the clash of values of the past and the present.

¹ *The Sound and the Fury* , 195 .

² Roberts Diane . *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* . University of Georgia Press. Athens . 1994 , p112

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Faulkner explores this matter through a scene where Caddy climbs a tree. The four Compson children are not allowed to be present in the funeral parlour of their grandmother Damuddy because of their age. Faulkner lights up his feelings about this scene thusly :

They were three boys one was a girl and the girl was the only one that was brave enough to climb that tree to look in the forbidden window to see what was going on ... and it took the rest of the four hundred pages [of *The Sound and the Fury*] to explain why she was brave enough to climb the tree to look in the windows.¹

Furthermore, despite Caddy's displacement in Compson household, she is still powerfully present in the centre of the novel. She plays an outsized role and occupies an exceptional place in the lives of the family members. By way of illustration, she compensates for the maternal love which Mrs. Compson withholds from Benjy, she ironically becomes Quentin's obsession with purity, and she is the object of hatred for Jason because of her divorce from Herbert Head². Nevertheless, her climbing the pear tree can also be regarded as her climbing out can also be considered as her climbing her brothers' lives; thus her becoming the absent centre of the novel. The incidents prior to her peeping at the funeral parlour are of measurable significance in terms of what kind of a person she is to become in the future. On the day of the funeral, the Compson children play in the branch near their house. Benjy's memories about the branch scene foreshadow Caddy's absence in the lives of her brothers :

I hushed and got in the water and Roskus³
came and said to come to supper and Caddy said,
It's not supper time yet. I'm not going

¹ Ibid, 218

² Herbert Head is the man who divorces Caddy upon knowing that he is not the father of her child. He is a rich man who owns a bank and he offers a job to Jason as a favour. However, Jason never had a chance to work at the bank because of their divorce.

³ Rokus is the black servant's husband.

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She was wet . We were playing in the branch and Caddy squatted down and got her dress wet and Versh said ,

“ Your mommer going to whip you for getting your dress wet .”

“ She’s not going to do any such thing .” Caddy said . “ How do you know .” Quentin said .

...

“ I’ll take it off .” she said . “ Then it’ll dry.” “ I bet you wont .” Quentin said .

“ I bet I will .” Caddy said .

“ I bet you better not .” Quentin said .

...

“ You just take your dress off .” Quentin said .

Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank . Then she didn’t have on anything but her bodice and drawers , and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water . When she got up she began to splash water on Quentin , and Quentin splashed water on Caddy .

...

“ Now I guess you’re satisfied .” Quentin said .

“ We’ll both get whipped now .”

“ I don’t care .” Caddy said .

“ Yes you will .” Quentin said .

“ I’ll run away and never come back .” Caddy said .

I began to cry ... Caddy was all wet and muddy behind ,

and I started to cry ... ¹

The relationship between Caddy and Quentin can be regarded as hinting at the line of Caddy’s digression from the established norms of morality , and her eventual disappearance from the lives of her brothers . Her undressing is too feminine for a seven-year-old girl , and her muddying the drawers she is wearing , in this respect , symbolizes her future promiscuity .

¹ *The Sound and the Fury* , 19-21 .

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Furthermore , the tension between Caddy and Quentin becomes stronger as the years pass by . As an oversensitive young man , Quentin can never manage to acknowledge the life style she adopts . In relation to Caddy's lack of chastity , he constantly blames himself for his inability to protect the honor of his family . Eventually , the harshness of the facts about his sister drives Quentin to suicide .

Despite her disrespectful state as a woman , Caddy's self-determination in playing the mother figure to her brothers can be considered as a strong influence in maintaining the wholeness of the family . Mr. Compson tells the children to be quiet after they return home from branch . Caddy asks the reason for this , and immediately says , “ Let them mind me tonight , Father .”¹ However , the children hear mother crying upstairs , in the funeral parlour . Aware of the fact that Damuddy is sick , the three boys think that something bad has happened to her . In the meanwhile , Caddy is trying to reassure her brothers by telling them that there is a party going on upstairs , and the voice they heard was of someone who was singing , apart from the funeral scene , Caddy's compensation for the absence of Mrs . Compson is especially significant in her relation to Benjy . John T . Matthews comments upon this situation as follows :

Three years older than her mentally retarded youngest brother , Candace Compson has taken on the role of nursemaid and protector for Benjy through their childhood . Benjy is unequipped to deal with any but the simplest events in his life , so Caddy helps him dress , explains his surroundings to him ... ; tries to interpret his garbled speech ... ; and even soothes Benjy at night by sleeping in his bed ...²

The above quotation proves to be a thoughtful testimonial of Caddy's willingness to play the mother figure and her readiness to have her brothers under control are attempts of

¹ Ibid , 28

² Mathews John , op cit , 38

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preserving the unity within the household . Nevertheless , such efforts prove to be worthless as her humiliation plays a crucial role in the disintegration and degeneration of her family .

From her childhood on , it is clear that Caddy's attitude which challenges the propriety of Southern aristocracy features her deviation from the established moral conducts . Despite the doubtfulness of the morality of her life style , Caddy stands as the only Compson who manages to get away from the tragic exhaustion of her family . However , her effect upon the disintegration of her family can be handled in terms of both the disgrace she brings upon the household and her absent presence in the lives of her brothers . The fact that she abandons her brothers as a dishonoured woman results in their feebleness to hold their lives and their drift into an endless experience of tragedy . Indeed , her success in keeping herself away from the misfortune of her family proves to have no effect upon the maintenance of the household's integrity .

In the final analysis , it can be argued that Caddy is a victim of the imposition of the rules of patriarchal Southern society and her family alike . She appears to be a loser in her rebellion against male convention . At long last , she is a fallen belle and a fallen lady of the South who tried to express her feminine personality in a male dominated South . The patriarchal Southern society and its idolizing the perfect southern belle did much damage to such women who could not meet all the expectations and failed to act out their role as a perfect belle .

Caddy represents the new Southern woman , the kind of woman who is independent and can take care of herself even though at times it can be really difficult and challenging . She is not afraid of men and she does not allow them to have control over her life . To quote Malin's words : “ Caddy establishes her independence and achieves freedom”¹ Furthermore, she uses her sexy looks and shrewdness to control men and make them do as she pleases . Her loss of virginity presents the downfall of the old and traditional mores and beliefs , and the rise of new more modern challenging views and conducts .

Each narrative within *The Sound and the Fury* is another attempt to know Caddy , but she manages to elude Faulkner , her brothers , and the reader . She represents a time to which we cannot return , an irrevocable loss. Wearing different masks and filling various roles , Caddy can never be fully understood . Ironically , she falls into experience through the

¹ Malin Irving , William Faulkner : An Interpretation . Gordian Press . New York . p 385

silence of others . There would have been no need for her to climb the pear tree had her parents told her about Damuddy's wake . Through silence ; however , she manages to leave her mark and acts as the cohesive force in the novel .

5. Quentin : Fixation on Southern Values

5. 1.The Splendour of the Old South Temper

Quentin , the oldest son of the Compson children , appears to be like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* . He thinks too long upon a subject and fails to bring any of his acts to completion . Quentin Compson is a typical character that has been stuck in the head of Faulkner's readership since the beginning . He is painted as the only character in Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* who is pretty concerned with honour , justice and family name and reputation . In addition to this , Quentin seems to be the only child within the Compson household who searches into the complexity of life , trying to find out some ordered meaning from life .

Once readers have found their way through the four different narratives in *The Sound and the Fury* , it is likely that Quentin's is the one that they will come back to. It is of essence to note that the rest of the narratives are marked by a quintessential sense of straightforwardness despite their own stream of consciousness style . Quentin's section is principally tangled and dangerous . Along with that , readers are provided with a close insight to everything that created Quentin Compson . the picture incorporates the worlds that Quentin unsuccessfully attempts to inhabit including Jefferson and Cambridge and more particularly the family which shaped him from birth to death .

As a troubled and problematic child in the Compson family , Quentin is the only member within the Compson household portrayed as having the opportunity for education . Nevertheless , he does not enjoy this blessing or feel any satisfaction in it because all he keeps thinking about is the glory of a long past , the loss or the absence of moral conducts , his father's nihilism and finally his sister's sexuality . Additionally , Quentin is perceived as a

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passive observer , he never does anything to even try to make his life better or to become happier and fulfilled . The following lines will shine light on this matter as such :

For most of his life Quentin has listened passively to the voices swirling around him . Always being told things , he could never really do anything , never affect events by his own acts either because there was nothing to do or because this conception of action was so hopelessly romantic .¹

An essential reality about Quentin is that though he is consumed by the South , he is removed from it and placed in Cambridge , this left a weighty impact on his psyche . Quentin is a son of the South who leaves the South on his parents' wishes to go to an entirely different environment in Cambridge . He is defined by his hometown as he defines himself by it . There is no Quentin Compson without the image of his beloved Jefferson which pervades his memories and centres his emotions on the issues which occurred and marked the few miles of land that he was exposed to .

By the same token , Quentin's moral principles do not belong to his epoch , instead they remount to the past , a past that does not correspond to Quentin's own experiences but rather to his Southern heritage . This disparity , with regard to Quentin's moral identification to a set of values that do not longer hold in the he lives in , creates an insuperable gap between the moral rules he upholds and Caddy's morality . Indeed , The South in which Faulkner grew up was widely referred to as “ frozen in its virtues and vices”² More exceptionally , Quentin crystallizes these attributes in the sense that he is unable to confront the past events surrounding his sister's loss of virginity . To explore this matter , a thoughtful clarification is provided by Sundquist Eric ; whereby he renders the connection between Faulkner's fiction and the Old South temper in his following expressive words :

The estrangement of present from the past is absolutely central to the Southern experience and often creates the pressured situation in which the past becomes an ever more ghostly and gloriously imposing model to the

¹Ibid , 245

² Robert Penn Warren . Faulkner A Collection of Critical Essays . Prentice Hall. New Jersey. 1966 , p 244

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same extent that ... it cannot recaptured , relived , or even clearly remembered.¹

Correspondingly , Quentin is one of the southerners addressed here , who have been heavily seduced by the ‘ ghostly and gloriously model’ of the antebellum . Owing to his strong devotion and idealization of the old order , he invests his identity with the moral system abided by the antebellum Southern society. Therefore , Quentin idealizes tremendously the construct of the old system. Consequently , he finds himself estranged from the society to which he actually belongs .

There is a fictional instance which is of paramount importance when Quentin is at Harvard , he is continuously tortured by his friends’ conversations about women and sex : “ Shreve said if he’s got no better sense than to chase after little dirty sluts and I said Did you ever have a sister ? Did you ? Did you ?”² Such an insignificant comment coming from people whose values differ from his own activates his disgust , painful and confusing thoughts about his sister’s promiscuity .

In a like manner , Quentin seeks meaning from the traditions of the South . As he, almost simultaneously suffers the reality of those traditions ; the implications of which bastardize and sully the very dominations which he tries blindly to accept . Quentin’s tragedy is one of hindsight . He has fallen from an innocent and unaware position of acceptance to a knowing , and through that knowledge , a suffering position . Quentin wants nothing more than simply being a Southern. Unfortunately , Quentin watches as the traditions which inform him , which serve as his foundations , begin to collapse .

To continue to take an in-depth look at Quentin , it is necessary to examine the other characters around him that influence his attitudes and thoughts . Indeed , Quentin is highly susceptible to external influences , particularly those of his family . No wonder , Caddy holds the greatest influence over him in the sense that her life and the weighty impact she has on her family provides the framework of the novel itself . It is the structure of his family as a whole that made Quentin what he is - the intersection of parents , siblings , and the overall picture of what it means to be a Compson . This incorporates the intense weight of the family history , their pre-eminent starts and their slow yet decaying state ,

¹ Sundquist Eric J. *The Myth of The Sound and the Fury* . Chelsea House. Philadelphia .1988 , p 117-145

² *Ibid* , 78

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In a like manner , it is of essence to state that a careful analysis of Quentin and how he ended up on that riverbank in Cambridge in 1910 discloses that to explore this matter distinctly , one has to start at the beginning by examining the parents : Mr. Compson and Caroline Compson . They are the pivotal figures within the Compson household as they exemplify the transition away from the Old South and into the new one that their children are fully established in . A point worth mentioning is that Mr and Mrs. Compson are not at the centre of their family enterprise as they each played an outsized role in turning what was once a decent family into a dysfunctional group .

Correspondingly , Mrs. Compson - Quentin's mother - is notably the least sympathetic character in the whole novel . Indeed , there is less time and reason to sympathize with her . When going deeper , there are three major and distinctive areas through which Mrs. Compson is viewed , notably her hypochondria , her physical immobility and her inability to meet maternal expectations . These can be considered as the pre-eminent attributes which define and exemplify how the other characters view her .

Mrs. Compson has never been the central maternal figure of the novel . Most would ultimately consider that to be Dilsey (the black loyal servant) or definitely Caddy . Instead , she rejects her children if they do not live up to the image that she creates for them , which would be impossible in their situation . As discussed formerly , She is primarily motivated by self-interest , family honour and reputation , in brief , she is rendered as a woman who is strongly motivated by social pressure and status . All she is interested in is a cleaner image of herself that was never there to begin with , and the way that she sees to do that is by figuring out the right people to blame for things that she had a hand in herself . She keeps arguing with her husband about whose blood has caused much trouble within their children , claiming it could not have come from the Bascombs (her family side) .

When it comes to Quentin , his relatedness with his mother is fairly obvious . As highlighted previously , she has never shown any maternal affection or care for her children which crystallizes the fact that Quentin did not have much connection to any mother figure at all . As far as paternal influence is concerned , Quentin was much more empowered by his father's . Yet his mother certainly had an effect on him as well in a way or in another . By way of illustration , Harvard is his mother's perpetual dream . Having a son at Harvard

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University could obviously ensure the family social standing , and Quentin was considered as not only the clever but mainly the intellectual one .

On the other hand , Mr. Compson's effect on Quentin is clearly rendered in the text . He is motivated as well by family honour , but it manifests in a different manner than it does in his wife . While Mrs. Compson's obsession with her family name is more about maintaining her own image , both within her family and to the insulated town of Jefferson , Mr. Compson's is far more rooted in history . He spends his time in his office surrounded by files containing men who are far greater than he has ever been , men who have lived greater lives than he will ever expect for his sons .

This division between their conceptions of family honour is also evident in their treatment of Caddy after her pregnancy is revealed . While Mrs. Compson is horrified and does everything she can to get Caddy married before the baby comes , Mr. Compson , on the other hand , takes her pregnancy and the news of her sexuality casually because his views on women and female sexuality do not lead him to expect anything more from her .

Mr. Compson's biggest and pre-eminent role is the part he plays in Quentin's life . When Quentin is unable to comprehend the things that are happening his family and even the things that are happening in his head , he constantly turns to the words of his father who used to tell him stories and who later spouted fatalistic philosophies at him that wormed their way into Quentin's skull more than any of the rest of the Compson children . Another way to point up this idea is to examine Giles Gunn's words , he argues that :

Quentin and his father occupy the ground in the middle . Both men are deluded and by nothing so much as the need to compensate for a sense of failure and impotence that they think has been visited upon them from outside . But Quentin's father's delusion is more self-regarding than his son's , in its cynicism more sodden with sympathy for himself and in its Stoicism less sensitive to the suffering his irresolution produces in others .¹

¹ Gunn Giles. Faith and Family in The Sound and the Fury . University Press of Mississippi.2006 .p 160

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Quentin tries tirelessly to overcome the destructive, nihilistic philosophy advocated by his father and to discover some meaningful values in life by which he can live and affirm rather than negate the existence of humanity. But every time he tries to do something positive he is reminded of some negative statements made by his father. Quentin wishes to reject his father's philosophy, but the world he lives in seems constantly to confirm Mr. Compson's view of the world. Caddy's lover Dalton Ames said that all women are bitches, Mr. Compson said the same thing yet in different terms.

As a result, Mr. Compson's nihilistic cynicism confuses Quentin and consequently leads to his inability to create an identity and a mind of his own. He is greatly influenced by his father which exemplified through his constant repetition of the phrase 'Father said'. This makes it clear that his mind is not his own, it is possessed by the ghosts of his ancestors who lived in the glorious past.

In the same regard, Quentin's desperate view of life is imposed on him by his father and his belief that life is miserable and that "the field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools"¹ Even though, he desperately tries to escape his father's influence and creates his own life, he does not succeed in that, and time appears to be the constant reminder that is miserable and unworthy. One of the ways in which Quentin tries to break free from the grips of both time and his father is by breaking the watch, but still he wears it in his pocket all the time and cannot separate from it.

Accordingly, Quentin looks at life, and everything he sees seems to affirm his father's cynical view of life. In the same spirit, he can find no ethical system of principles that will compensate for his father's negative view of the world. All the acts around Quentin appear to affirm to a high extent Mr. Compson's views of the modern world. To this end, Quentin figures out that life is not only useless but hopeless, and so he resolves to commit suicide.

In a nutshell, it can be argued that Quentin can not derive meaning from his family because he is separated from them emotionally and geographically. Quentin seeks a solid ground in a South where there is none. He grasps at the tale even while it deteriorates in front of him. The loss of meaning resulting in the loss of hope is his most absolute tragedy.

¹ *The Sound and the Fury*, p93

Unable of being Southern , Quentin blindly loses the only remaining source of meaning he had in the world .

5.2. Suicide as an Escape

As Quentin is not interested in the future , he feels like he has no future . Due to his strong obsession and long devotion to the past , he denounces the future . This indifferent attitude towards the future is a strange pattern of behaviour which can have some psychological explanations and implications . Rollo May , a prolific figure in the field of psychology and psychiatry affirms in his book *Existence : A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* that “ severe anxiety and depression blot out time , annihilate the future ... the most painful aspect of the sufferer’s predicament is that he is unable to imagine a future moment in time when he will be out of the anxiety”¹ This pattern of behaviour fits Quentin’s case since he is unable to envisage the future .

According to Quentin , Caddy exemplifies the failure to maintain the moral conducts and standards he values above everything else . These mores and ethical values are an integral part of how he understands and interprets the world around him , in this manner , Quentin appears to be unable to come to terms with his sister’s transgression of them . This mode of thinking is apparent in the following expressive words :

And I will look down and see my murmuring bones and the deep water like wind , like a roof of wind , and after a long-time they cannot distinguish even bones upon the lonely and inviolate sand.²

¹ Rollo May . *Existence : A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* . Basic Books. New York .1958 , p68

² *The Sound and the Fury* , p 80

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This extract seems to be a genuine testimonial of Quentin's thoughts about death . For Quentin , committing suicide was the only option left to escape the horror of Caddy's promiscuity as he always considered it the biggest transgression a woman can commit . Therefore , it was more acceptable for Quentin to put an end to his existence rather than living with the ugly truth that his sister has broken one the salient moral principles he has long obeyed and acknowledged .

To this end , it becomes quite obvious that death is the ultimate purification . The metaphor Faulkner utilized to endorse this point : 'they cannot distinguish even bones upon the lonely and inviolate sand' renders to a great extent the idea that death is a purified state . By dying , Quentin not only put an end to his life , but mainly he could terminate the thoughts and actions which provided him with nothing but torment .

By the same token , it is the sense of failure that works disastrously on the young and innocent mind of Quentin . The will and power to live are not only absent but lost in him as the only thing he wishes is death . He is heavily affected and destroyed by the surrounding events that he can neither accept nor control so he chooses death . It is true that Quentin is in love with death , but the question that is worth asking what is the cause for his death wish ?

It was not Caddy's sexual affairs with men the sole cause of Quentin's failure . The despair and sorrow that finds place in Quentin's mind found its roots during his childhood . As a sensitive child , he hungered for love , sympathy and understanding , but the cold and selfish mother could not give her children any authentic and real love or affection . As a careless mother , she had a negative impact on her children , more than this , she was the principal cause of Quentin's lack of confidence .

Accordingly , while Quentin was in the university he readies for suicide ; he broods over the lost honour of his family , he broods as well over his mother's cold and unsympathetic attitude towards her children , he broods over Caddy's sexual behaviour and her arranged marriage to Herbert Head . His experiences during the last day of his life (June 2, 1910) exemplify his preoccupation with the past . For him , it was a day of recapitulation .

Another worth mentioning point is that Quentin's parents risked their financial failure so that he joins Harvard University which was a huge burden on Quentin's psyche . Hence , this feeds into Quentin's spiral towards suicide . As highlighted earlier , Quentin was aware

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to a large extent that he is going to take his own life and the reality of this intense failure that he will not pursue his education is one of the many possible reasons that he eventually decides to put an end to his life .

Correspondingly , Quentin on the last day of his life keeps thinking of his mother , he says of his family “ finished , finished , we are all poisoned”¹ He says again to himself , “ If I could say Mother , Mother”² It is a cry of anguish from a boy who has been deprived of a mother’s affection . His cynical father as well could not understand him . Mr. Compson as a major source of authority , Quentin looked up on him for advice , but he failed to get any help from him . Thus , it can be argued that it is the parents mishandling of a sensitive child that eventually compelled him to commit suicide .

In Quentin’s desperate attempt to show everyone that he can be independent and that he is not controlled by anyone , more than this , that he can decide on his own , he does the most cowardly thing , thinking that suicide is the only exit from his problems . After several unsuccessful trials , Quentin fails and he , he comes to terms that there is no other option left but to end his life and release himself from all the agonies and ordeals . The reason why chooses water for his final destination is simply because water is calming , soothing , tranquil and mainly silent . Additionally , water can be perceived as a peaceful escape from the loud corrupted world .

No wonder , Quentin insecurities over his sister’s sexuality , his father’s cynical philosophy , his mother’s carelessness and coldness and his inability to impose the patriarchal code of the long gone Old South in a changing world resulted in his infection with a moral disease . And so , Quentin’s character is one of the most dreadful illustrations of the consequences of the attempt of living in the present by following the code of an ashen past. In other words , Quentin is the mirror for old- fashioned norms and values of the Old South . Nothing good comes out of that only death and decay of an individual and of a society in general .

6. Jason : The Embodiment of the New South Spirit

¹ Ibid , 192

² Ibid

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Another lost son of the Compson family is Jason who is named after his father – Jason Compson- has never really been a true Compson . He does not share Compson’s fondness of musing on the great past and comparing it with inglorious present , instead he looks into the future . Growing up in a loveless environment as the Compson household left traces on the Compson children , Jason included His section pictures a world which is different from the first two sections. Jason , the second son of the Compson children believes in no code of honour , he does not believe in the past and he masters no use of traditional values. As he does not allow his feelings to control his view of life . More than this , Jason can adjust himself to the situation and turn it to his own advantage and benefit . He is rendered as the only character within the Compson household who has accepted the present reality and dismisses the myth of the Southern past . He believes in nothing but the omnipotent dollar and turns every action to its cash value . In a few words , Jason represents the modern order that came to replace the patriarchal past of the American South.

In addition to this , as opposed to the former generations of Compsons , Jason is a man of action rather than a man of thinking . He does not believe in his father’s nihilism , nor his mother’s whining , for him if he acted the same as they , all Compsons would “ be down there at Jackson [state asylum] chasing butterflies ”¹ He is a complete contrast to his two brothers and does not feel at all attached to his family . Indeed , a remarkable fact about him is that he differs tremendously from his brothers . As highlighted previously , Quentin is stuck in the past , yet Jason places much weight to his present life and near future . Benjy , finally is incapable to differentiate between past , present and future since he is completely lost in his memories .

In the same strain , Jason has no sense of the past , he does not think of the past and how to correct the mistakes from the past , instead he thinks how can he make his life better in the present . To this end , he is probably the one that suffers the most as he cannot keep up with the consequences of other people’s mistakes and misdeeds . He has to work and watch out his family because his parents suffered a loss of wealth and status leaving the family in misery and hardship . Since he is not capable of making amends with his parents , he therefore seeks revenge by torturing innocent people around him , with a major emphasis on the ones

¹ Ibid , 144

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he knows full well cannot do anything to harm him back . David Minter gives a comprehensive description of this situation as such :

Although he is aggressive in expressing the hostility he feels for his parents, Jason is never also satisfactory to avenge himself on them. Accordingly , he finds his victims where he finds them , his preference for being for those who are most helpless like Benjy and Luster , or most desperate Caddy .¹

In light of this , it is plainly evident to state that Jason is miserable and unhappy with his own life and he sees pleasure in torturing other people probably because he enjoys to see the suffering of other people just like he does , or even more . Nevertheless , the darkness of Jason's world is to a high degree of his own making .

As a further matter , Jason is the only child that ever caught his mother's attention in a positive way . Jason is ultimately his mother's , for his adolescent perversity can be traced to the outsized role he plays as her favourite , in other terms , Jason represents her last hope . According to her , the other Compson children are more of a shame and a burden , and she cares only about their wrongdoings . Jason exemplifies Mrs. Compson's pride , for he is the only one she is not ashamed to call her child . As his mother says : “ let me have Jason and you keep the others they're not my flesh and blood like he is ”²What is more is that she often affirms that he is the only one of her children who shares the blood of her family and he is more a Bascomb than a Compson , To quote her words “ Jason will make a splendid banker he is the only one of my children with any practical sense you can thank me for that he takes after my people , the others are all Compson ”³

No wonder , Jason is Mrs. Compson's favourite child and she feels that he is the only Compson who tries to salvage the family fortunes . According to her , he is the breadwinner , the head of the household and the only person who tries to keep the decaying walls of the house intact . Because of her affection to Jason , Mrs. Compson takes pride in his becoming the head of the family after Mr. Compson's death . But her blindness prevents her from

¹ Minter David. Faulkner : Childhood and the Making of *The Sound and the Fury* , American Literature . Cambridge University Press , Cambridge . 1979 p 384

² Ibid , 66

³ Ibid , 116

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seeing the fact that she is deceived by her son though she depends heavily upon him in every way.

One of Jason's noteworthy attributes is his obsession with money and material wealth . The reason for his materialism can be deduced to the fact that he is the only member within the Compson household who has to work to gain some money for his own needs and desires , On the other hand , Quentin goes to Harvard thanks to the selling of his family's pasture , and Caddy marries well .However , after the death of Mr. Compson , Jason becomes the breadwinner , this resulted in his strong need to control everything that is happening in the house .

Correspondingly , his obsession with wealth can be as well the result of the fact that money somehow always slips from his hands , he is always close to getting it , but never actually has it .To explore this matter , first and foremost , his father sells the last pasture which is Benjy's so that to send Quentin to Harvard , and so Jason is left with no heritage . Then , after Caddy and Herbert Head became officially engaged , he was promised a well-paid job in Herbert's bank as a compensation for not being send to Harvard like his brother Quentin , yet unfortunately the engagement was called off and so was Jason's promise job . This marks the beginning of Jason's bitterness and grudge towards his own sister .

Deprived of his prospects by Caddy's promiscuous behaviour , Jason steals his niece's money because he believes that he is taking a compensation for his lost job . One of Jason's serious problems is that he furiously believes that for every loss there will an equal and opposite compensation .His whole view of life and people is based on money and therefore he sees people as a source of money and a significant opportunity of gaining wealth.

An essential reality about Jason is that he is hard , detached and cold-hearted . He never entertained any warm feelings towards his family. There are several fictional instances that explore this reality . By way of illustration , Jason's immoral materialism is quite apparent in the deal he makes with Caddy during Mr. Compson's funeral . Despite her mother's rejection , Caddy attends her father's funeral without being noticed . Nevertheless , Jason notices her and they have a quick talk . Caddy offers Jason fifty dollars in return for

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seeing little Quentin ¹ for only a moment. Jason wants to be paid in advance but Caddy prefers to pay him afterwards. He asks her: “don’t you trust me”, to which Caddy replies, “No I know you, I grew up with you”²

After a pretended reluctance, he agrees to show her the baby in exchange for a hundred dollars. After a successful attempt to convince the family members by a series of lies, Jason manages to take little Quentin out of the house in a raincoat. However, he makes the driver pass so fast so that Caddy can only have a glimpse of her child. This can be perceived as a cruel way to play with a mother’s feelings. When he comes to know that Caddy sees her baby for a second time with Dilsey’s aid, he becomes very furious, Dilsey tells him “You’s cold man Jason, if man you is”³ Sadism is also an evil attribute that is associated with Jason. This is seen when he burns the tickets for the show one by one, knowing quite well that Luster was desperate for one ticket.

Another fruitful example of Jason’s dishonesty can be exemplified by the case about checks Caddy sends for the upkeep of her daughter. Mrs. Compson rejects to use the money sent by her daughter. The reason for this becomes apparent during one of her check-destroying ceremonies. She states “We Bascombs need nobody’s charity. Certainly not that of a fallen woman”⁴ However, she is not aware of the fact that the checks she has been destroying throughout years are the fake ones which Jason arranges after cashing the real ones. It is obvious that Mrs. Compson’s blindfold confidence in Jason within such essential matters plays a crucial role in the breakdown of her family’s morality.

Furthermore, Jason’s personality is dominated by bitterness and hate. But nowhere is this bitterness more pointedly directed than it is toward the feminine world in general and the women in his immediate family in particular. Some of the first negative reactions toward a female that Jason experienced were feelings of insecurity and abandonment. Jason was only a few years old when his grandmother ‘Damuddy’ died, yet what is remarkable is that she had a genuinely affectionate relationship with the young boy. The loss of a parent-figure at an early age can cause feelings of insecurity in the strongest of children. The implications of Damuddy’s funeral were incomprehensible to Jason.

¹ Quentin, also referred to as “Miss Quentin” is Caddy’s illegitimate child.

² Ibid, 288

³ Ibid, 290

⁴ Ibid, 273

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Mrs. Compson was at the source of many of Jason's problems . Every since he was a baby , she had never stopped harping him on the idea that Jason was her pride and joy and the only one of her children who truly loved her and did not give her a minute's sorrow . Not only did such behaviour serve to further alienate Jason from his brothers and sister , but what was even more tragic was that Jason , as well , ultimately came to attribute all those glowing qualities to himself. He agreed wholeheartedly that , as she put it , he did not have a streak of Compson selfishness or false pride . It is not surprising that after several years of brainwashing , Jason held such a high opinion of himself in relation to the rest of humanity . His mother had been telling him for years that he was better than everyone else , and he could not help but agree with that.

Jason's cruelty is apparent in the harsh treatment towards his niece Quentin . He always refers to her as “ once a bitch , always a bitch ”¹ Quentin turns out to be a cheap wanton because of Jason's cruel behaviour towards her . His sole concern is the money Caddy sends to her regularly . His love for the dollar alienates him from everybody . He is ready to pay his mistress Loraine forty dollars , but he refuses to have any emotional involvement with her . He idealizes his prostitute , he even affirms that he has every respect for a good honest whore .

Even though Jason appears to be the favourite child of his mother , he does not hesitate to misbehave even with her and even cheat her . By way of illustration , when little Quentin does not come down to breakfast on Easter morning , Jason fears the worst . He asks for the key to her room from Mrs. Compson , and when the key is not immediately available he shouts at her : “ give me the key old fool ! ” (*The Sound and the Fury* , 281) The disrespect that the son shows to his mother is an instance of the decadant behaviour of the Compson family .

In a similar vein , it is due to Jason's cruel behaviour that Quentin turns out to be what she is . Though little Quentin absorbs some of the cruelty from her uncle , she does try in the beginning to maintain some family harmony . Furthermore , Quentin was brought in a loveless atmosphere , she was deprived even of the little care and attention that her mother Caddy had got as a child . Caddy was full of selfless love , she sincerely loved her brothers

¹ Ibid , 198

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Benjy and Quentin . Miss Quentin is a frustrated and an unhappy girl because of the cold atmosphere inside the Compson household . Jason always holds Quentin responsible for being deprived of the bank job promised to him by Herbert Head and thus this justifies his harsh treatment towards her . It is of essence to note that it is out of absolute frustration that Miss Quentin exclaims “ I don’t see why I was ever born” and when Jason reproaches her for her promiscuous and immoral behaviour , she says “ I don’t care , I’m bad and I’m going to hell , and I don’t care , I would rather be in hell than anywhere where you are” (*The Sound and the Fury* , 207)

At times , she wonders at Jason’s cruel treatment towards her and cannot figure out the cause . Thus , she keeps asking her grandmother , Mrs. Compson “ why does [Jason] treat me like this , Grandmother ? I never hurt him” (*The Sound and the Fury* , 276) Mrs. Compson for whom Jason is her favourite child , tells her that Jason “ is the nearest thing to a father you’ve ever had . It’s his bread you and I eat. It’s only right that he should expect disobedience from you” and Miss Quentin in her anger says to Jason “ whatever I do it’s your fault . If I’m bad, It’s because I had to be . You made me . I wish I was dead . I wish we were all dead.”¹

When Quentin runs away with a man from the fair , it may be presumed that she runs away not out of a sense of adventure or out of love for the man , but mainly to escape from the toxic atmosphere of the Compson household which she regards with absolute disgust . Cleanth Brooks provides a thoughtful clarification for this subject matter , he asserts that : “ with the girl Quentin’s departure , the sad story of the Compson family is now at an end . All are dead or departed except the wining hypochondriac Mrs. Compson , the cold and sterile bachelor Jason , and the uncomprehending Benjy”²

On Easter Sunday , when Jason loses his money , he also loses his sense of identity . Money represents a material object that Jason controls and that increases his self-perceived potency . With his money gone and Quentin , on whom he blames all his problems , also gone , Jason is left with nothing . It seems that the unlimited authority of society succeeds in overtaking Jason . He is incapable of stopping Quentin and she will remain in the public eye .

¹ Ibid , 277

² Cleanth Brooks . William Faulkner : The Yoknapatawpha County . Yale University Press . New Heaven and London , 1976 , p 346

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Jason as well is exposed to the watch of society that he fears most . This reveals Jason unsuccessful attempts to restore the family or its wealth .

In a nutshell , it can be argued that Jason is the villain in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Indeed , there are several fictitious portrayals that render this reality . To cite an instance , Jason's villainy is apparent in his treatment of his sister , his idiot brother and niece. In the same respect , William Faulkner , in speaking of his character from *The Sound and the Fury* , he portrayed Jason as the most vicious character he ever created a rendition of complete evil . In light of this , it is generally agreed that Jason Compson ranks near the top of the list of Faulkner's most despicable imaginary creations .

In all of Faulkner's villains , a noticeable fact about them is their lack of any capacity to love . This lovelessness is seen in their attitude towards women and nature as it becomes obvious that Jason has no interest in nature or in women more particularly , they are viewed as objects to be used for one's profit . For Jason , all women are just ' bitches' and his relationship with Loraine (his prostitute) is in fact nothing more than a contract , he wants to be clear of women , for they are the primary responsible for his misfortune , be it his mother, sister or niece .

In his noteworthy book "*William Faulkner : the Yoknapatwpha County*" , Cleanth Brooks affirms that :

To be fully human one must transcend one's mere intellect with some overflow of generosity and love . Faulkner tells us that Jason is able to compete with ,and even hold his own with , the Snopses. This is the worst damnation that he can utter . When a Compson turns Snopses , then the family has indeed run out , and the end of an order has come.¹

In light of what has been said , it can be said that Jason , though isolated and unrepentant to survive , he has a steady way of thinking and cold calculation in all things that surround him. Money, certainly, interests him much more than family, he puts the real side at the head of all relations.. Thus , Jason is the last to survive in the Compson line , yet

¹ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , 338

his survival seems to be meaningless in the sense that he rejects any sort of relationship and remains a bachelor and childless, and so, putting an end to the Compson line.

7. Benjy : A Slave of his Memories

Benjy is the youngest son, who was born an idiot, to whom the past is indistinguishable from the present. The past for Benjy is sensation and it lives in the broken images that crowd his mind. Faulkner takes us through the thirty years of Compson history through the heart and mind of the narrator that it is within his power. Benjy, the idiot can only express himself through sensation. though he cannot reason, yet at the deeper level he stands as a man of feeling, good and noble in the modern world.

The thirty three years old Benjy is physically mature yet mentally retarded. His unspoken monologue is, in Cleanth Brooks words, like “primitive poetry, a poetry of the senses, in which the world for Benjy is a kind of confused, blooming buzz-registers with great sensory impact with minimal intelligibility”¹ In his world of timelessness, full of confusions and helplessness his heart broods for the lost Caddy, after she goes away, the one person who sincerely loved and cared for him.

All his warm associations are centred around her because she takes care of him, protects him from the ill treatment of Mrs. Compson. For him, ‘she smelled like tress’ and when she goes away, Benjy hugs her soiled slippers. Benjy strong devotion and deep attachment to Caddy is of much significance in the sense that she represents the only human factor in Benjy’s life, for the other things he loves are inanimate objects such as the fire, the pasture, the red and yellow cushion, the blue bottle and the jimson weed.

Benjy’s connection with other members within the Compson household reveals their true nature. Mrs. Compson talks to him in a very harsh and cold tone. Mr. Compson, on the other hand, is too busy and he is not interested in Benjy’s affairs. The most that he asks is “

¹ Cleanth Brooks, op cit, 326

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well, Benjy, 'Have you been a good boy today?'"¹ Then, Quentin does not go out of his way to hurt Benjy, but he does not show any concern for him. According to Jason, Benjy is a nuisance and as a child he hurts and teases Benjy by cutting up his paper dolls. Even Luster - the servant's child - wickedly whispers 'Caddy' in his ears to remind him of her painful absence. It was only Caddy who was sincerely concerned with Benjy's happiness, she used to feed him, sleep with him, dress him up. All in all, her first thought was always for Benjy.

In the same strain, Benjy is panted as a person who required a lot of delicate handling, but in the Compson family, except for Dilsey and Caddy, he did not get this sympathy from anyone. A good way to point up this idea is to examine Cleanth Brooks words in his noteworthy book *William Faulkner : First Encounters*, whereby he affirms that :

Faulkner is interested in Benjy because he tells us something about humanity at large and because represents the human being reduced to its ultimate dimensions and essentials. In short, Faulkner uses Benjy not to debunk humanity, but to affirm its distinctive quality and value. Benjy calls forth love, and in his own manner, he is able to return love.²

Benjy's section is having its own significance because it offers a glimpse on the characters traits. In this manner, Faulkner has preferred Benjy as the narrator of the first section so that to provide a better insight of the tragic events and circumstances of the Compson family history. Indeed, it is through Benjy's section that one can get a true sense of the quality of the Compson household : a father who is defeated and cynical, a mother who lacks maternal feeling, a promiscuous sister 'Caddy', an old brother who is haunted by the past - Quentin - and finally a materialist brother who has no sense of ethics.

¹ Ibid, 83

² Cleanth Brooks. *William Faulkner : First Encounters*. Yale University Press. London, 1983. P 48-49

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In his helplessness , Benjy is rendered as a pitiable figure in a hopeless situation and everything to him is beyond his comprehension .

A point worth mentioning is that Faulkner made a use of the child like voice of Benjy to illustrate the need of a return to innocence for language among other motives . Throughout the novel , Faulkner plays with language and alternate narrative voices to emphasize his desire for the play and innocence of language as well as certain truth that is inherent in modern writing and language . Faulkner as an author tends to believe that a truth or message lies within the novel . This message of truth may be different for each other , but the novel contains some sort of truth .

In pursuit of this aim , Faulkner devoted a whole section to tell his story through the mind of an idiot who is incapable of making judgments or understanding any relationships between ideas or events . At thirty three , he has not learned that fire burns , he places his hands on the hot stove , yet he makes no association between the pain in his hand and the heat created by the fire . And he does not have any sense of time and makes no differentiation between the past and the present . A remembered event is as real to him as an occurrence in the present .

According to some critics , the Compsons ' rejection of Benjy is an epitome of the moral degeneration of their family as highlighted through their intrinsic lack of love , denial of self and aristocratic pride . Throughout , the novel Benjy cries with grief when remembering his beloved sister Caddy , one of the few people showing him compassion and understanding . Attempting to explain Benjy's incapability to understand Caddy's absence, some critics affirm that Benjy was not rational enough even to be selfish . He recognized tenderness and love though he could not name them , being an idiot he was not even aware that Caddy was missing , yet he knew that something was wrong which left a vacuum in which he grieved .

In Benjy's mind , mother and daughter are inextricably confused . Benjy is a three year old in the body of a thirty three year old grown man . The simple syntax of his narration reflects his retardation , the chaotic nature of his story reflects his inability to think logically and to discern past from present . Although chaotic , he is able to distinguish between what is

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right and wrong , for he is simply blessed with the gift of morality in a family . Benjy is incapable of doing sin or evil because he is naturally good .

To Benjy who had never known mother's affection , Caddy is a warm and a loving person . She is clear and life-giving . She gives him the tenderness to guard him in his innocence . Her love is unselfish and she genuinely loved her two brothers – Benjy and Quentin - Caddy knows all the little things that bring happiness to Benjy , the other members show no interest in making him happy . She knows that Benjy likes the ‘ red and yellow cushion’ as she knows that he feels happy when she sings for him “ Santa claus , Benjy , Santy Calus”¹ In her relationship with Benjy , Caddy is warm , loving and innocent .

In spite of mental inadequacies , Benjy is exceptionally aware of his surroundings . Before Caddy's loss of virginity , constantly remarks how ‘ she smelled like trees’. He ultimately becomes distressed when Caddy lets him smell her freshness . Then one day , Caddy no longer smells like trees .This marked the beginning of Caddy's promiscuity , the progression of which forever takes Caddy away from Benjy's life . Benjy understands that Caddy is a changed girl , and he dislikes this change in her . This matter is artfully perpetuated by Benjy in his narrative when he cries :

Her hand was against her mouth and I saw her eyes and I cried . She stopped again against the wall , looking at me and I cried and she went on and I came on , crying , and she shrank against the wall , looking at me . She opened the door to her room , but I pulled at her dress and we went to the bathroom and she stood against the door looking at me . Then she put her arm across her face and I pushed at her , crying . (*The Sound and the Fury* , 43)

As a further matter , time for Benjy , does not exist in the traditional sense of past , present and the future , but rather as a chaotic mix of those senses creating the sensation that his life progresses in a cyclical rather than a linear motion . In contrast to Quentin , Benjy has

¹ Ibid , 22

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no concept of time . While time is of great concern to the reader in Benjy's section . Olga Vickery , a famous American critic on Faulkner's fiction , has endorsed this idea as follows :

Benjy exists outside of time , removed from the limits of the world , and therefore he has no internal struggle with his destiny . Quentin is so bound by time that his future is nothing but unavoidable horror , and seeks to transcend it . Jason , the final Compson brother is the only character truly struggling with the Calvinistic notion of fate and free will , and it is this struggle that causes Jason to spew his caustic bitterness on the people that surround him .¹

Furthermore , the readers can neither praise nor criticize Benjy , for his present is the past and his future is simply not thought of . Faulkner constructed a place for Benjy that exists without a typical sense of time . Just as Benjy has no knowledge of the progression of time , he is unable of good and evil because he had no knowledge of good and evil as explained by Faulkner in an interview with Jean Stein .

As one searches to make sense of Benjy's garbed thinking , it becomes obvious that Benjy struggles in telling the story not only because of his mental incapacity , but also because of the story he has to tell . His section is a warning of the rest of the story to come , telling us of the irresolution of the Compson family and the lack of ending that each action brings . No wonder , Benjy has no sense of the progression of time , he is bound to the same stories repeated over and neither he nor his family can ever progress to an ending or a resolution of past problems , just like the American South.

¹ Olga Vickery , op cit , 288

Conclusion

Within this chapter a wide range of central and pre-eminent points were amplified . To this end , it is of essence to draw an overall image on the points that were addressed in this momentous part . Therefore , the following transitional lines will not only pave the way for the final chapter , yet they also highlight the different key matters that were at the core of this chapter .

Initially , it is worthy of note to state that the Southern family is perhaps one of the most complex images throughout Faulkner's work, but nowhere is the dynamic more fraught than in the Compson family of *The Sound and the Fury*. Collectively, the Compsons constitute less of a unified whole than a chaotic microcosm of dysfunctional relationships.

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They often exploit or place blame on one another or rationalize their own failures . As discussed formerly , the Compsn family has lost much of its past glory and its rich aristocratic background .

In *The Sound and the Fury* , the emotional deprivation of the self and the moral corruption of the Southern community are depicted through the ethical disintegration of the Compsns , a pre-Civil War aristocratic family. The characters that are utilized in the novel exemplify the fatalism , self-absorption , obsessiveness , lack of purity , and the immoral materialism that prevail the post-Civil War South.

In the study of all his characters , Faulkner goes deep into the dark corners of the human heart . He brings to the surface a weakness working in the hearts of the four children of Compsn family and how it helped in the fall of the family .The latter's intense suffering was a result of rejecting the old virtues and codes of honour . Through the Compsns , Faulkner tries to elucidate that it is impossible for man to live a life bereft of traditional , ethical and moral values .

One of the key elements that were exemplified in this chapter is paternal betrayal . As featured formerly . The father's inability to provide decent care for his family , the mother's unwillingness to show any interest in her children needs , and the fact that none of the two , who were both supposed to be the idols to their children , showed any real paternal love for them , left the four children at the mercy of bitter and harsh world and marked their destinies forever . There is no wonder , why the lives of the children fell into decay and why all the family lost its pride , dignity and wealth . It all happened because the parents , who were supposed to prepare their children for their adulthood and give them the childhood they deserve . The Compsns demonstrate how one's destiny can go wrong without any guidance , how inadequate upbringing can develop wrong ideas about the self and the world , and how broken family reflects on the lives and characters of its members .

Faulkner's portrayal of the Compsn dissolution can be of many insights . An essential reality about the Compsn siblings is that each and every one of them appears to light up a proper image that requires a thoughtful examination and investigation . Indeed , each of the Compsn children is a fruitful representation of the state of Faulkner's region . By way of illustration , Quentin Compsn embodies the spirit of the glorious Old South in the sense that

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he is troubled with concepts of virginity , purity and honour , his thoughts and feelings have a wide base in the past that he wishes not to let go .

Then , the materialist Jason is a corrupted son and brother , he turns out to be a hard-hearted man and has no love for anyone as he turns all relationships to commercial transactions . In other words , Jason represents an image of the modern order that came to replace the long and lost order , he therefore , crystallizes the New South temper , Benjy , finally , is painted as a slave of his memories , he lives in the broken images that crowd his mind . What is more , he is lost between the past and the present pretty much like the American South itself .

The stylistic devices Faulkner makes use of in his portrayal of the end of an order are in parallel with the themes of *The Sound and the Fury* . More importantly , his employment of flawed characters enables a more profound rendition of the tragic experiences that they undergo . Their psychologically weak nature enables Faulkner an intense use of modernist literary techniques that empower the emotional effect of the novel . Fragmentation , repetition, interior monologues and the disruption of chronology are the salient methods that constitutes Faulkner's fiction .R.W Flint once asserted that “ Faulkner's fiction , made up as it is of a great many interesting styles and techniques , deserves to be called thoroughly composed , *durchkomponiert*¹ , as the Germans say of music , not only in what it presents , but in what it suggests.”² Nowhere is the *durchkomponierung* more brilliantly manifested than in *The Sound and the Fury* .

¹ A term applied to songs which use fresh melodies for each verse rather than the same melody for each . Its English translation : through-composed .

² Faulkner as Elegist. Hudson Review , VII , Summer , 1954 , p257

Chapter Four

William Faulkner's Hope for Regeneration

Introduction

The journey through Faulkner's fiction continues , as this thesis moves forward to this prominent last chapter , it reveals another pre-eminent point related to Faulkner's sense of optimism in his fiction . To assume that Faulkner's fiction is a world of words inhabited by psychologically driven , haunted characters is to miss the total vision . Additionally , the eternal verities of Faulkner's Nobel Prize Speech were at the heart of his attitude toward man.

In his Acceptance Speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature , Faulkner affirmed that “ man will not merely endure : he will prevail. He is immortal , not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice , but because he has a soul , a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance . The poet's , the writer's duty is to write about these things . It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart , by reminding him of the courage and honour , hope and pride , compassion , pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past . 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.”

The ringing optimism of William Faulkner's Nobel Award Acceptance Speech and its applicability to his novels has been the subject of immense controversy and challenge. How can such a positive affirmation of belief squared with a fictional cannon that has featured records of defeat as those of Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom Absalom !* and Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* ? How could the privation of life and loss of honour that is projected in most of Faulkner's fiction in light of *The Sound and the Fury* , *Absalom Absalom!* , *As I Lay dying* , *Light in August* , and so many other noteworthy literary masterpieces , come from the same artist who summoned up such high-minded qualities as ‘ love , honour , pity , pride , compassion and sacrifice ’ ?

It is a truth generally acknowledged that though Faulkner's fiction is heavily marked by a strong portrayal of man's deprivation and self-created annihilation is predictive of a new age of hope , about the possibilities of the human assurance of what is significant , meaningful and valuable to human living. In light of his above stated Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech , it can be stated that , Faulkner's words appear to be words not of a pessimist , instead they seem to be words of a man who has a profound and optimistic belief in Man himself , failing

possibly but failing through his own fault , not because he is a victim of a cruelly malignant fate .

In the same vein , Faulkner writes of violence , of human folly , of greed , of a brooding sense of evil in the universe , yet in the midst of all this dark turmoil gleams a light . In pain , sorrow , conflict , degeneration and loss , Faulkner sees a chance , a possibility to gain better knowledge of life . According to him , redemption does not mean freedom from a curse, but mainly acceptance of the curse and a higher awareness of life and man through suffering . Because of this , there always remains in Faulkner's difficult but passionately honest art the possibility of joy and hope . In pursuit of this aim , Faulkner's thoughtful imagination brings to the surface a pre-eminent selection of typical characters which exhibit the endurance needed to withstand a basically tragic environment in which death , suffering and poverty abound .

1. William Faulkner's Sense of Hope and Endeavour for a Necessity of Regeneration

An essential exciting reality within Faulkner's fictional universe is a proper group of characters who do more than endure ; who in spite of the tragedy which surrounds them , find peace and personal fulfilment . These individuals illuminate Faulkner's philosophy that mankind can withstand any sorrow and still face life heroically . Through these characters' speech and actions , Faulkner renders a system of living which transcends simple endurance. These characters demonstrate artfully an often-ignored facet of Faulkner's philosophy – his optimism . In the midst of the most depressing of Faulkner's books may be found a positive element .

In the same regard , it can be argued that there are several worth mentioning literary creations that explore this reality . By way of illustration , in *Sanctuary* , a terrifying story of rape , murder , prostitution and lurching , a positive individual emerges . Ruby , a prostitute who gives the novel its thread of hope . In spite of being poor and unable to help her common-law husband when he is unjustly jailed , she continues to visit him and to take care of their child . In the face of tragedy , Ruby continues to struggle . She and all the other positive characters remain constant in their positive acceptance of life's sadness . Herein lies Faulkner's optimism . life may be unjust and cruel , but man will continue to be brave , to face tragedy and to work through it . A good clarification for this subject matter is delivered by F. Farnham , he states “ it is only by willingly accepting defeat and still going on that the individual can come to terms with William Faulkner's cosmos”¹

Faulkner's characters who appear to elucidate his sense of hope do embody some qualities that Faulkner considers as crucial to becoming a fulfilled individual . One of the most significant traits identified with such characters is an involvement with mankind . Faulkner's novels are packed with various examples of individuals estranged from humanity. To cite an instance Joe Christmas in *Light in August* and Popeye in *Sanctuary* epitomize

¹ James F. Farnham . Faulkner's Unsung Hero : Gaven Stevens . Arizona Quarterly , 21 (Summer 1965) , p131

thoroughly the individual who is so far removed from his fellowman that he loses his compassion . Popeye , a local gangster , ravishes a young woman , kills a slow-witted acquaintance , and watches as the young woman and another man make love . He is portrayed as having no conscience and exists for animal pleasure only . Joe Christmas , on the other hand , avoids sincere relationships with others . His affair with Joanna Burden is not based on any real affection but on mental and physical needs .

In total contrast to Christmas and Popeye , there is a character who is one of Faulkner's favourite ones . V . K. Ratliff , a sewing machine salesman in *The Hamlet* , who constantly remains close to his fellowmen . As a part of his job , he travels around the farm communities selling his wares , thus keeping in touch with the common people . He is quite aware of his common bond with humanity , even when that means recognizing his shortcomings .

In a similar vein , Cleanth Brooks writes “ unless the controlling purposes of the individual can participate , he is indeed isolated and is forced to fall back upon his personal values , with all the risk of fanaticism and distortion to which such isolation is liable”¹ And so , for Faulkner , a kind-hearted character must demonstrate an involvement with mankind , for this attribute deepens one's awareness of human problems , making man more compassionate .

Understanding the tragic nature of life is another considerable trait for the positive character . As stated previously , Faulkner's world is filled with the sorrows of the real world . Death , murder , incest , rape , greed and corruption are a vivid part of his environment . Indeed , man suffers in Faulkner's universe . Very often , the sensitive individual cannot stand what the world offers . To project this reality , Darl , in *As I Lay Dying* is placed in a mental hospital , for he could not cope with the reality of his mother's death and his father's determination to take the body to Jefferson . Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* , is another fruitful example that endorses this point , he as well finds the world intolerable and commits suicide . He is deluded by life , he cannot escape his sister being a mixture between good and evil .

Directly related to the need for understanding life's tragedies is the final pivotal feature of the benevolent character which is adopting a positive response to this sorrow . The

¹ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , 69.

presence of such a quality renders Faulkner's world an optimistic one . In spite of defeat , death and loneliness , man can still face life with hope , a hope founded upon a strong realization that man can withstand everything . What is worth paying attention to is that many, if not most , of Faulkner's characters do not achieve this last trait .

All in all , found in the human form is the capacity to prevail . Some of Faulkner's benevolent characters epitomize this ability to remain hopeful in spite of life's pain. Following the same mode of thought , Gabriel Vahanian agrees that Faulkner's world “ is not a universe of despair . On the contrary , hope springs forth constantly , even if at times the heartbeats of the human reality are not sufficient to sustain it . Hope is affirmed even against hope – which is for us human beings , the way it usually is.”¹

As a further matter , although Faulkner most conspicuously projects the decay and the destruction of man , it would be incorrect to assume that he echoes man with no hope for regeneration . Indeed , throughout his works there is a strong moral undertone which presents time and again the importance and the necessity of the moral and spiritual rebirth of man . As it would be incorrect to assume that Faulkner gives all his characters a chance to attempt a rebirth .

Throughout his works , Faulkner brings to the surface four essential steps by which a man become regenerated : the acceptance and practice of the brotherhood of man , the gaining of individuality , the acceptance of progress and change , and the capacity to endure . These steps toward regeneration at first glance appear relatively simple , and it would not be to remiss to speculate as to why more of Faulkner's characters are not able to attain regeneration .

Nevertheless , most of Faulkner's characters are clouded over by traditions , customs and codes that they are unable to see the possibility of their rebirth . The submergence of the southerners into isolated self-pity and false pride after the Civil War made regeneration for most of the aristocrats next to impossible . Faulkner , however , has a typical formula for regeneration of man , and the fact that the great majority of his characters are unable to find it for themselves is of a secondary nature .

¹ Gabriel Vahanian . William Faulkner : Rendezvous with Existence . George Braziller . New York . 1964 , p 105

In the same strain, Faulkner displays the first crucial component toward man's rebirth is the acceptance and the practice of the brotherhood of man. In the same respect, the influential critic Robert Penn Warren affirms that: "the central fact in Faulkner's work is the recognition of the common human bond, a profound respect for the human. There are, in one way, no villains in his work except those who deny the human bond."¹ Faulkner captures the quality of life that characterizes the whole person which is symbolic of the human capacity for caring, protecting, treasuring and for loving life. He endorses this idea by pointing out that the most indispensable ingredient used in creating a feeling of brotherhood is love. If a person is capable of love, then the other previously stated steps toward regeneration become easy.

One idea to which Faulkner may be said to adhere to consistently is that without love, no one can ever be a human being. According to him, the opposite of love is not hate: it is doom, the fate of any man or woman who ignores love pursues selfish ends. By way of illustration, Lawrence Edward Bowling's words highlight this reality as such "In Faulkner's writings the lovers are never losers, and the non-lovers are always losers – even when they win."²

Indeed, when man is deprived of the capacity to love, he will be as doomed as were most of Faulkner's aristocrats who, as a whole, were a group whose only love was for themselves. Some of the necessary attributes to practice the brotherhood of man are honour, justice, pity, compassion and sacrifice which are built strongly on the base established by love and consequently create a strong bond of brotherhood with other individuals. It is of essence to note that one could become at least partly regenerated without following the other steps suggested by Faulkner, but unless one practices the brotherhood of man, there is no hope for his moral and spiritual rebirth.

Another pivotal step for man in gaining rebirth is the maintaining of his individuality. Faulkner has always and long stressed artfully and strongly the importance of individuality. To endorse this point, Faulkner's following powerful words in his speech '*Never Be Afraid*' are a good case in point whereby he affirms that:

¹ Warren, op cit, p 78

² Lawrence Edward Bowling. William Faulkner: The Importance of Love in Four Decades of Criticism. Michigan State University Press. USA. 1978, p 117

Our danger is the forces in the world today which are trying to use man's fear to rob him of his individuality , his soul , trying to reduce him to an unthinking mass by fear and bribery ... It is not man in the mass who can and will save Man . It is Man himself , created in the image of God so that he shall have the power and the will to choose right from wrong , and so be able to save himself because he is worth saying ; - Man , the individual , men and women , who will refuse always to be tricked or frightened or bribed into surrendering , not just the right but the duty too , to choose between justice and injustice , courage and cowardice, sacrifice and greed , pity and self ; who will believe always not only in the right of man to be free of injustice and rapacity and deception , but the duty and responsibility of man to see that justice and truth and pity and compassion are done .¹

Correspondingly , it is obvious that Faulkner considers that the salvation of man lays in his individuality as he assumes that if a person is guided by rules , mores , and codes ; he soon is unable to think for himself . According to him , when man is no longer able to think for himself , he is actually no longer a man . He is incapable of contributing anything to mankind , for he lacks originality , and so he is obsolete and useless .

As a further matter , a point worth mentioning is that Faulkner places much weight to the significant importance of man's ability to accept progress and change . The world is in a continual state of change , and man is faced with two possibilities – either to accept change and move forward or remain haunted by the past and consequently become destroyed . A thoughtful clarification for this subject matter is delivered by Faulkner in his noteworthy words as such :

It's got to go forward and we have got to take along with us all the rubbish of our mistakes and our errors . We must cure them ; we mustn't go back to a condition , an idyllic condition, in which the dream (made us think) we were happy , we were free of trouble and sin . We must take the trouble and sin along with us , and we must cure that trouble and sin as we go .²

¹ William Faulkner . Never Be Afraid. The Harvard Advocate , CXXXV (November , 1951) , p 7

² Ibid , 78

To this end , Faulkner stresses the importance of man to move forward and leave the burden of the past behind by accepting change and progress . In this manner , he believes widely that man must ever tread forward even though he is laden with codes , tradition , customs and sins of the past which weigh him down . Nevertheless , it is worthy of note to state that man will never be able to carry all the great weight of the past indefinitely , so at every opportunity , he should rid himself of heavy portions of his load so that he can progress freely and creatively , by leaving , perhaps, a less heavy burden for the next generation to carry . By and large , man's inability to accept the change and progress taking place in the world may ultimately lead to his death , as it has been said that cessation of change is death .

The necessity of endurance is another key component for man to achieve regeneration. The latter equals stasis and acceptance of what life brings , an abiding by and being in harmony with the elemental life process and the unfolding of human events . As it means a recognition of man's imperfect nature and life's imperfection , without desire for perfection , simply a desire to live . It is apparent repeatedly and significantly in Faulkner's cycle of fiction . In order to highlight this reality , Dilsey , the black loyal servant in *The Sound and the Fury* is a good case in point. She is a fruitful epitome of man's immense ability to endure. Dilsey's individuality , wisdom and morality prevent her from being defeated by the decadence to which the southern tradition was exposed .

Robert Penn Warren projects this reality , he affirms that “ the constant ethical centre of Faulkner's work is to be found in the glorification of human effort and human endurance which are not confined to any one time.”¹ On the other hand , the influential Walter J. Slatoff states that the major idea which Faulkner “ never abandons or seriously undercuts is that man should and must keep on trying whatever it is he must try and the more destructive elements of mental and moral decay. As the aristocrats sank into physical decay , their mental balance, in many cases , was lost .”² The lost capacity for clear thinking led the way to the more serious moral decay which stripped the aristocrats of honour and virtue and cause many of them to acquire the qualities of the lower animals or to become completely annihilated , or both .

¹ Ibid , 67

² Ibid , 77

In a nutshell , for Faulkner , man can transcend his dying and decayed surroundings and become regenerated . In pursuit of this aim, he must be able to love his fellow man and be willing to make sacrifices because of that love , he must assert himself as an individual who , because of individuality , is an assert to mankind ; and he must be strong enough to accept change and progress even if they do burry beautiful things in their broad sweep . Faulkner confirms that if a man can accomplish these goals , he will gain a rebirth which will enable him to endure and prevail .

When examining the Yoknapatwapha cycle of aristocrats by measures of Faulkner's rules for regeneration it becomes obvious why decay was so prevalent among them . Few of the fallen aristocrats were able to grasp the concept of the brotherhood of man , else slavery obviously would never have been condoned and practiced by them . Most of the aristocrats were so bound by codes and traditions that the achievement of individuality was almost impossible . The acceptance of change was next to impossible for the aristocrats because only a few of them were willing to turn their backs on their former grandeur and accept the reality of the present . Consequently , since few of the aristocrats were able to transcend their state and reach upward for redemption , endurance seemed to be quite impossible , all was left was defeat and decay as the only fates open to them .

2. On Those who Endure and Prevail

As a further matter , it is of essence to note that William Faulkner , when he accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature affirmed :

He (today's writer) must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid , and teaching himself that , forget it forever , having no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart , the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed – love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice . Until he does so he labours under a curse .

In light of this , it can be argued that these words are an eloquent testimony to the truth that Faulkner , through his fiction , touched the very core of reality and was always interested in men and women in their universal humanity and his themes were always universal human issues . These themes were played out by the many families that inhabited his imaginary Yoknapatawpha County . Eventually , it is in the rise and fall of these families that one can comprehend Faulkner's realistic handling of the human issues .

Furthermore , in his influential piece of work entitled *Towards a Psychology of Being*, Abraham Maslow endorses a powerful point in his following noteworthy words where he asserts :

The state of being without system of value is psycho pathogenic ... The human being needs a framework of values , a philosophy of life , a religion or religion-surrogate to live by and understand by , in about the same sense that he needs sunlight , calcium or love ... Historically, we are in a value interregnum in which all externally given value systems have proven to be failures , eg ; nothing is worth dying for¹

There may be more to be endured than to be enjoyed in Faulkner's world , yet his fiction offers man a means for sublimating himself and for prevailing over his existence , as it demands of man an attempt to apprehend the notion which is life . Faulkner has artfully dramatized the problem of living in a historical moment suspended between a dead past and an unavailable future , dramatized it in his own terms as a clash between traditional mores no longer valued or relevant and at a time of moral uncertainty an opportunism .

Correspondingly , Faulkner echoed for his readers a dramatic force available to only a creative writer . R.W.B Lewis writes of Faulkner's creative power

Certainly no other American writer engage his readers so strenuously ; and there is no doubt that , except for these who fear and resent him on quite other grounds , the readers of Faulkner do or can derive immense aesthetic pleasure in the participation with him that verges on the creative.²

¹ Abraham Maslow . *Towards a Psychology of Being* . New Haven Publishing Ltd. UK. 1972. p 206

² Lewis , R.W.B . *American Literature The Makers and the Making* . St Martin's Press . New York .1974 , p10

However, Faulkner at the same time, has attempted successfully to reach in images painted through his successful imagination that brings to light fascinating characters, the meaning of human virtue and ethics: pride and forbearance, love, humility and truth, in doing so, he offered us a strong and salient framework firmly based on pivotal values, ethical and moral principles and conducts.

Blinded by what they must be, the people whom Faulkner presents in his fiction are not fully aware of these values, and the mistakes they make as they search for them are hideously grotesque. It is worthy of note to state that part of the cause of tragedy in some of Faulkner's novels is the characters' inability to accept an imperfect and ambiguous world, while a part of the suffering is occasioned by their unwillingness to accept their own guilt.

Even though Faulkner was keenly aware of the pervasiveness and power of evil, but he firmly believed in the nobility of stoic endurance. A good way to point up this idea is to examine Faulkner's literary creation *The Town* whereby he speaks metaphorically of the rusty nail embedded in the trunk of a tree as such:

It don't go away, it just stops being glaring in the sight, barked over; there is a hump, a bump of course but after a while the other trees forgive that and everything else accepts that tree and that bump too until one day the saw or the axe goes into it and hits that old nail.¹

In the midst of the chaos of reality, man needs the ordering power of committed human love, the power of endurance, moral fortitude and loyalty. These traits are deeper and stronger than the contingencies of time, place and social circumstances, meaning the unredeemed history which has distorted the human personality. Mankind endures not only by commitment to ideality which forces one into a denial of life's limitations but by an acceptance of life which enables one to face its limitations without question, complaint, rebellion and defiance. But mere endurance is not enough. To prevail is to live, to move, in other terms, to do something positive.

¹ William Faulkner. *The Town*. Random House. New York. 1957. p 303

With regard to the question as to how man will prevail in the darkness that surrounds him, Faulkner replied to this by insisting that man will do so because :

... man is tougher than any darkness. That man's hope is the capacity to believe in man, his hope, his aspiration towards a better human condition ... man's condition can be improved not as a gift to him, but by his own efforts.¹

One of Faulkner's quintessential discussions occurs in *Go Down Moses* where Isaac goes on to say that God knew all about man's capacities for both good and evil because he had "created them and knew them capable of all things because he had shaped them out of the primal"² Nevertheless, Faulkner insists strongly on man's responsibility for his actions.

It is paradoxical one observes an irrational madness like that of Joanna Burden or Sutpen or remember those fanatic furious creatures like Snopes who drive their burning hearts against the stable circumstances or personal inadequacy until they are destroyed, at this point, one comes to terms with the fact that they are as they are because they wish to be. Because whatever be the obsession: pride, money or sex, they have it because they willed it into being. It is due to this freedom to choose that responsibility becomes inescapable.

But it is not sufficient to say that man should simply do what comes naturally, for a man is not naturally good. He is created with a potentiality for good but he must achieve it. Faulkner appears to highlight this reality through his fiction. In his Yoknapatawpha cycle of fiction, the influence on individual destiny of historical or sociological forces is the predominant concern. Novel after novel plaintively reflects the fetters in the existing codes and values. According to Faulkner, a hero of significance who can be referred to as a 'prevailer' in his microcosm, has to be one who can triumph over these fetters and succeed in imposing a new code on society. As a matter of fact, Faulkner's characteristic saints and heroes are those who come out of this conflict as victors over themselves.

Another essential point that renders Faulkner's vision of endurance is mother love. The only creative and affectionate love which he perceives in a woman is mother love which is enduring, a love that will suffer birth, idiocy, perversion, sin and failure. Besides, this love is compassionate, comprehending and gentle. By way of illustration, Dilsey, the black

¹ Robert A. Julliffée ed. *Faulkner at Nagano*. The Kenkyusha Press. Tokyo. 1956. P 157-158

² William Faulkner. *Go Down Moses*. Penguin Books Ltd. New York. 1942, p 292

servant in *The Sound and the Fury* attracts one's attention through her distinguished manners . A careful examination of Dilsey's attitudes reveals that in the midst of chaos , she caresses Bejy's head . Another similar act of compassion is highlighted by another pivotal figure that elucidates this reality as well is Lena Grove in *Light in August* through a fictional instance where she peacefully feeds her baby by remaining indifferent to the erupting violence in Jefferson .

Accordingly , from Faulkner's point of view , only when a woman is engaged in the sacred act of replenishing the earth and assuring the survival of mankind is she fulfilling the roles she was created to perform . For him , she symbolizes the possibilities of fertility , creativity , serenity and abundance which human life offers to mankind . Faulkner sees the role of an ideal woman as characteristically fostering and sustaining , creating order out of chaos through her love and service to others . She undergirds society , upholds the family and community mores .

Furthermore , in one of the discussions at Charlottesville , Faulkner further developed his belief that man will prevail in terms of the human instinct to fight against Snopesism

There is a quality in man that prevails ... there is always someone that will never stop trying to cope with Snopes , that will never stop trying to get rid of Snopes . When the battle comes it always produces a Roland . It does not mean that they will get rid of Snopes or the impulse which produces Snopes but always there is something in man that don't like Snopes and objects to Snopes and if necessary will step in to keep Snopes from doing some irreparable harm .¹

In a nutshell , it becomes evident that Faulkner cannot deny the hope which the positive qualities of life offer. As it will be shown in the following lines , that it is through people like Dilsey , Lena Grove and Ratliff who are considered as 'the prevailers' , " the good stock peopling in tranquil obedience to it the good earth"² with their humane code that

¹ Fredrick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner eds. *Faulkner in the University : Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-58* . University of Virginia Press . USA. 1959 , p 34

² *Ibid* , p 305

Faulkner is able to lend support to his oft repeated statement that the highest of virtues is endurance . Sally R. Page provides a thoughtful clarification for this subject matter as such :

The motivating force behind Faulkner's fiction as well as the motivating force in his most dynamic characters is the urge towards wholeness . Faulkner viewed this urge as the most basic drive in human life ; it is experienced as a deep inner yearning for love , for understanding , for satisfaction , for fulfilment and completeness . The continual struggle to satisfy that yearning propels the individual through the growth process .¹

Faulkner considers the ideal man as one who can adapt to change , while in the “ furious motion of being alive.”² Man in motion is a man responsive , and as Gavins Steven puts it “I also am motion”³ , implying that in the flux of time man is capable of entertaining new truths and modifying the pattern of his own life .

The affirmation that man will not simply endure but prevail , left obscure in the Stockholm speech can easily be interpreted in the light of Faulkner's fiction which projects a call to responsibility and suffering , a realisation of the endless web of consequences which ensues from every human act . The following lines will explore this subject matter in details by providing some essential insights .

3. The Benevolent Figures

As stated formerly , in William Faulkner's fiction there is an undercurrent of optimism that surfaces the benevolent characters who inhabit his mythical kingdom Yoknapatawpha County . Some of Faulkner's characters who fall in the category of beneficent figures are individuals who understand and epitomize beneficence . At this point , a careful attention will be paid to this typical group who already possess positive traits of remaining in the stream of humanity , viewing life as basically tragic in nature , and remaining hopeful in the face of life's tragedy. These characters exemplify their benevolence from the outset of the book and are still optimistic in their outlook on life at the book's conclusion .

¹ Sally R. Page . *Faulkner's Sense of the Sacred* . University of Alabama Press. Alabama . 1976 . p 104

² *Ibid* , 239

³ *Ibid* , 135

First and forever most, in order to display a code of living, this proper classification of characters embody certain traits and qualities which allow them, despite poverty, suffering and ordeal to discover happiness. The first characteristic shared by the individuals who comprehend beneficence is their primitive nature, in other terms, their closeness to humanity keeps the characters in touch with others. Edmond L. Volpe utilizes this categorization of the primitives for characters who are "simple, non-intellectual people who have somehow escaped social conditioning."¹ The use of the word simple in describing the primitives is highly significant. These individuals come from the rural, working segment of society that does not have many material possessions or public approval. This mode of thinking is visible in Faulkner's literary creation *Light in August*, Lena Grove epitomizes the contentment of the primitive. She unashamedly searches for her wayfaring lover while she grows larger and larger with his child, walking barefoot from town to town and welcoming help when it is offered.

Volpe uses as well the word non-intellectual in describing the primitive where he does not equate it with stupidity. The non-intellectual does not solely rely on logic to understand the world; thus his viewpoint is more balanced than that of the intellectual. As an illustration, Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* can continue to endure the harsh realities of the Compson household through her commitment to caring for her fellowmen. As a result of her unflinching faith in God, she appears as the only figure that can be considered as undefeated by the curse that surrounded the Compson family. Thus, the primitive's second key trait is being fortified by his non-intellectualism.

Moreover, another crucial attribute of the primitive is his oneness with nature. An essential reality about the beneficent character is that he has a close tie with the earth. He has not learned the rules of social behaviour of the educated man, yet his link with living things is stronger. Usually, the closer the character is to nature the more admirable he is as a man. To cite an instance, Ned McCaslin, in *The Reivers*, is portrayed at home sleeping in barns and caring for horses. He appears to be very close to nature, a relationship which keeps him and all primitives at one with the world. Since man too, is a part of the natural world, he must remain in contact with it to be a positive force in the world.

¹ Edmond L. Volpe. *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York. 1964, p 26

Besides , the benevolent figures , because of their simplicity , their non-intellectualism and their closeness to nature have always known , understood and embodied beneficence. These figures have never varied from their hopeful acceptance . Although few in number , these characters are Faulkner's examples for modern man . and so , examining these primitives reveals a clearer perception of Faulkner's philosophy of living . Most of the primitives are grouped in a category of blacks , in Faulkner's fiction the blacks are from the South and are generally servants . As Edmond Volpe affirms “ the blacks have less socialization to separate them.”¹

The four major benevolent figures to be analyzed and tackled are : Molly Worsham Beauchamp in *Go Down Moses* , Lena Grove in *Light in August*, Ratliff in *The Hamlet and The Town* , and Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* . As it will be shown in the following lines , the lives of these primitives reveal a code of living which may serve as a model for mankind .

4. Molly Beauchamp

Thus , early on and consciously , black women as reality became possibilities only to themselves . To others they were mostly seen and described in the abstract , concrete in their labour but surreal in their humanness.²

The very first benevolent figure to cast light on is Molly Beauchamp in Faulkner's piece of literature *Go Down Moses* who is not a verbal character ; however , her actions and behaviours compensate for her silence . Molly is rendered as a simple woman who rarely leaves her front yard .³ As a matter of fact , Molly places much value to matters of the heart , rather than affairs of the mind . When her husband is caught up in the desire to find a fortune, Molly grieves , for she fears that he will break a law of God . Her simple faith is not with the

¹ Ibid , p 27

² Maya Angelou. They Came to Stay . National Geographic 176 (May 1989) p 208

³ *Go Down Moses* , op cit , 99

money he might find , but with her husband's spiritual welfare . Molly's closeness to nature is emphasized in the following passage :

His wife [Molly] used to sweep every morning with a broom of bound willow twigs , sweeping the clean dust into curving intricate patterns among the flower-beds outlined with broken ... glass . She had returned from time to time during the spring to work the flower-beds so that they bloomed as usual – the hardy , blatant blooms loved of her and his race .¹

In light of the above quotation , it can be argued that Molly's love for nature is illuminated by her willingness to work in the soil . This closeness to nature along with her simplicity and concern for the heart qualifies Molly as one of Faulkner's quintessential primitive characters .

The section entitled ' *The Fire and the Hearth* ' in *Go Down Moses* spans a period of forty-three years . Molly is portrayed once at a younger age as a married girl and another time at an older age as an old and wizened woman . Thus , the effects of time and circumstances can be studied as they affect Molly heavily . Early in her marriage , Molly has to prove her love of humanity in a most difficult awkward situation .

When Zack Edmond's wife is about to bear their first born . Molly has to deliver the child because a heavy rain has washed out the bridge , thus preventing the doctor's arrival . A few days later , Edmond's wife dies , Molly then takes over the responsibility of nursing and caring for the motherless infant , even though she has one of her own , in pursuit of these aims , Molly is kept on in the house for almost six months . A good way to point up this idea is to examine the following words :

... Keeping alive on the hearth the fire he had lit there on their wedding day and which had burned ever since though there was little enough cooking done on it now ; thus , until almost half a year had passed and one day he went to Zack Edmonds and said , I want my wife . I need her at home .²

¹ Ibid , 49

² Ibid , 42

The fact that Molly has been kept on in the house for six months angers her husband Lucas . What is more , his anger is fed by the suspicion that his wife Molly could have been made to serve as more than just the nanny of the infant . When she returns that night with both their son and the white child , Lucas is further incensed by the sight of his wife nursing the white child . Molly came back that night because earlier on in the day Lucas had demanded her return from Zack Edmonds , yet Molly cannot come back and leave the white child behind, she never says that there is no one else to look after the child . Her very action of bringing the white child back with her suggests her attachment and concern for the child .

Indeed , Molly is quite moved by pity and compassion for the child's situation , the child was motherless at birth . She could have foreseen her husband's getting angry at the sight of the white child , but the fact that she brought the baby along anyway because she could not leave him and had to do so epitomizes a typical quality of decidedness and strength in her . Her action exemplifies resolve and courage to do what she feels right . It may be argued that being a black woman at that period , Molly would have felt it a part of her obligation and duty to care for her employer's motherless child . Nonetheless , Molly is more than merely being dutiful or obliging when she takes this role , thus she is sincerely and uncomplicatedly moved by the plight of the child .

To this end , it can be said that Molly's action within the novel are considered humane whereby she does exhibit a rigorous caring humanism in her care of the white child . More than this , never does Molly show any difference in the love she feels for both children . In order to project this reality , Roth Edwards – the white child whom Molly raised like her own – describes Molly as :

The woman who had been the only mother he, Edmonds ever knew , who had raised him , fed him from own breast as she was actually doing for her own child , who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too , teaching him his manners , , behaviour – to be gentle with his inferiors , honourable with equals , generous to the weak , and considerate of the aged , courteous truthful and brave to all – who had given him , the motherless without stint or expectation of reward that constant and

abiding devotion and love which existed nowhere else in this world for him...¹

Correspondingly , Roth Edmonds ' acknowledgment of all that Molly had done for him manifests a typical picture of the person she is . Molly's venerable qualities may have been seen through Roth's eyes - but Molly becomes exalted – in this situation and thus Roth's acknowledgment of Molly's qualities becomes an affirmation of the kind of person she is .

Another worth mentioning fictional instance in *The Fire and the Hearth* is when Molly tries to ease a difficult situation for Roth Edmonds . At this point Roth is a young boy and started to become more and aware of the complex relationship between blacks and whites. And so , one night Roth refuses to allow Henry – Molly's ad Lucas son – to sleep with him in the same bed , something they had done since they were both infants . Eventually , his awkward behaviour shamed him , he knows this and tries to appease his guilt he goes over to the Beauchamps' place one night to try to make up in his own way . The following lines crystallize this reality to a large extent :

Then one day he knew it was grief and was ready to admit it was shame also, wanted to admit it only it was too late then ,for ever and for ever too late . He went to Molly's house ... Molly was there , looking at him from the kitchen door ... There was nothing in her face ; he said it the best he could for that moment , because later he would be able to say it all right ... I'm going to eat supper with you all tonight .

... There was nothing on her face ... Course you is ' she said . I'll cook you a chicken .

Then it was as if it had never happened at all ...

Molly called Henry and then a little later himself , the voice as it had always been , peaceful and steadfast ; come and eat you supper .²

¹ Ibid , 117 .

² Ibid , 92-93

Accordingly , Molly acts as if nothing had changed , by doing so she has sensitively and tactfully eased a difficult situation for Roth . Although there are no clear insights into Molly's inner thoughts , her actions point as evidence of her compassionate nature . She must have been aware of the difficulty and easiness existing in the relationship between blacks and whites in the postbellum South. Therefore , she understands quite well what Roth has to grapple with as a young white boy coming to terms with this relationship .

In behaving as if nothing has changed , Molly is in actual fact helping Roth . Because she does not view the situation judgementally – even though her son Henry is affronted – She demonstrates a strong desire to maintain peace and stability in being neutral in a non-judgmental way . As a further matter , for Molly , by loving and caring the surrounding people -with a major emphasis on Roth – she is thus fulfilling God's call for man to love . Her intense concern for Roth is shown in her desire to combat the possible emergence of racist attributes in him . Since she cares for young Roth , she wants him to adopt some moral and ethical values that help him consider others not as lesser individuals because doing that would lessen his own self worth .

In the same respect , Faulkner does not mention the workings of Moll's mind . Whatever is perceived externally of Molly comes from the words or thoughts of those who come into contact with her . Moreover , In the chapter entitled “ Go Down Moses” , she worries over the whereabouts of her orphaned grandson , Samuel . Although he has been banished from the Edmonds' place for stealing , she still cares for him . Molly's anxious desire to find her grandson after he has left home for five years without a word in between , could depict on Molly's part an instinctive urge that she must locate him soon as it is of utmost necessity .

I come to find my boy ...

I don't know whar he is . I juts knows that Pharaoh got him. And you the law . I wants to find my boy¹

...

¹ Ibid , 279

Because he didn't for one moment doubt the old Negress's instinct . If she had also been able to divine where the boy was and what his trouble was. He would not have been surprised .¹

...

Do you know what she asked me this morning , back there at the station ? he said.

... she said , "Is you gonter put hit in de paper ?" ... "And she said it again : " Is you gonter put hit in de paper ? I wants hit all in de paper . All of hit" . And I wanted to say , " If I should happen to know how he really died , do you want that in too,?" And by Jupiter , If I had and if she had known what we know even . I believe she would have said yes. But I didn't say it . I just said , " why , you couldn't read it , Aunty." And she said , " Miss belle will show me whar to look and I can look at hit . You put hit in de paper. All of hit ." ²

To this end , Molly reiterates with emphasis that she wants the actual story of what had happened to her grandson . Her illiteracy is not a hindrance to reality for her . Now that her grandson has been 'found' and brought back 'right' , Molly demonstrates an acceptance of reality . Faulkner provides a comprehensive description for this subject matter as follows :

Yes(he thought)it doesn't matter to her now . Since it had to be and she couldn't stop it , and now that it's all over and done and finished . she doesn't care how he died . She just wanted him home , but she wanted him to come home right .She wanted that casket an those flowers and the hearse an she wanted to ride through town behind it in a car .³

Molly's insistence on locating her grandson and then in turn having him 'come home right' depicts her genuine love and care for one whom she has raised herself . Again , Molly's wish for her grandson to 'come home right' exhibits on her part not only the value she accords him as a human being in the sense that even death by execution does not lessen her grandson's worth as a person , but also a recognition of her loved one's existence and individuality as a person .

¹ Ibid , 280

² Ibid , 287-88

³ Ibid , 288

This pattern of behaviour reveals that Molly's love and compassion for others encompass even the seemingly unlovable . In Molly's philosophy , even the outcast should be allowed to remain close to his fellowmen . Her grief upon her learning of Samuel's death , an event which she has foreseen is so poignant that a visitor , Gavin Stevens , has to leave the wake.¹ By and large , Molly's love for all men illuminates her closeness to humanity .

In the same vein , the love Molly feels for her fellowman does not conceal life's tragic nature from her . She understands it and faces the tragedy daily . Each of Molly and Lucas were born black , this fact has made their life miserable and at times unbearable . As a black woman , Molly has no resource , but to obey Zack Edmond's summons for her to care for his child .

Although the novel does not explicitly state that Zack forces Molly to engage in sexual activity , Lucas believes that this injustice has occurred . Lucas forces Jack to return Molly home , when she is finally back , he wonders : “ why she aint even knowed unto right now that I ever even suspected”² At this moment , Molly faces the tragedy . She understands her husband's suspicion and deeply feels her own pain . Later , after years of marriage to Lucas , Molly decides to leave , for she comes to terms that his compassion for money and knows that his greed will lead to unhappiness .³

5. V.K Ratliff

The second benevolent character to bring to light is V. K Rattliff , who occupies a central and a representative position in the battle against Snopesism , itself a microcosm of mankind's determined struggle to prevail is clear in Faulkner's literary compositions entitled *The Hamlet* and . As highlighted in the preceding chapters , the Snopes represent a soulless urban mentality tat impersonally uses people to effect a private gain . In contrast , Ratliff exhibits a compassionate response to man , a response acquired through a long association

¹ Ibid , 381

² Ibid , 49

³ Ibid , 102

with land . The land has taught him the truths of the human heart with regard to patience commitment and love , he has applied these verities to the human situation .

Cool and astute yet deeply humane , Ratliff is the most sensitive , incisive and trustworthy narrator in the trilogy , more than this , he is the closest touchstone of enduring and instinctive human understanding . Imbued with moral fortitude and flexibility that enables him to accept progress , Ratliff becomes a strong and adaptable opponent of the exploitation . What the country people cannot articulate for themselves about Flem Snopes machinations he points out to them shrewdly humorously and ironically : it's for us to cope , to resist ; us to endure and if we can survive.”¹

Ratliff represents the novelist's conviction that if civilization and sanity are to be preserved , they must be fought for constantly . There are passages in *The Hamlet* in which his tone is almost one of the unrelieved pessimism but at no point is Ratliff overwhelmed by the evils , nor is his own spirit infected by the pessimism these events seem to produce in others . To demonstrate this reality , John Longley has artfully observed that Ratliff hates :

Sin but not the sinner ; Snopes-ism , but not Flem himself . There is never any indication that Ratliff wants personal revenge on Flem . No doubt he often wishes to see some nefarious scheme of Flem's backfire or blow up , but this only to wish a lack of success of conduct that is evil to begin with . Like the true knight of faith , he desires only to stand between the weak and the helpless and all cynical , brutal exploitation . Like a true evangelist , he wishes not to punish but to amend ; not to banish and cast out but to redeem.²

The creation of Ratliff and the role he is provided as opposition to Flem's are commentaries on Snopesism . He is both a soil to Snopes and a generator of the Snopes lore . The anonymous narrator accurately identifies as a “ humorous talkative man who was ready to laugh at a joke on himself as at one on anyone else”³ Whereas the Snopes embody extremes of natural passion and human acquisitiveness , Ratliff provides the norm of social and economic behaviour . He is a clever shrewd enough trader to enjoy making a moderate profit as a travelling sewing-machine salesman , but he is without either excessive avarice or pride .

¹ William Faulkner , *The Town* , op cit , 102

² John. L Longley . *The Tragic Mask : A Study of Faulkner's Heroes* . The University of Carolina Press , Chapel Hill. 1957.p 65

³William Faulkner , *The Hamlet* , Random House , New York . 1956. p54

Moreover , the recurring consistent contrast between Ratliff and Flem becomes a unifying force of the trilogy . For instance , the business methods of the two are deliberately contrasted . Ratliff's business deals are based on his clever knowledge but it is a knowledge which admits credit , kinship , reasonable trust in trade and his success needs an amicable reciprocal relationship with others . Being sympathetic and humane , Ratliff is able to see good even in Ab Snopes whom he pronounces to be “ not naturally mean”¹ but just “soured”² from experience .

However , he is no blind optimist seeing good in all men . He is indignant at the salacious Lump's Snopes's exploitation of Ike's relationship with the cow and with fine irony, coerces the school teacher I.O into thinking of the unsullied name of the Snopes and putting an end to the business . After the violent turmoil of the ‘Spotted Horses’ , Ratliff is the one who goes for Will Varner to set Henry Armstid's broken leg and the one who talks Lum into letting slip that the horses were in fact Flem's . But he is unwilling to abet the others in their foolishness and refuses to give Armstid the money he has lost on the horse . To quote his words : “I never made the Snopeses and I never made the folks that can't wait to bear their backside to them . I could do more but I won't , I won't , I tell you.”³

The fact that Ratliff was clearly a character whom Faulkner regarded as being especially important , both for what he did and what he represented and one into which he poured a lot of humane qualities is obvious . In an interview in 1955 , Faulkner explicitly named Dilsey and Ratliff as his favourites. In his words : “ Ratliff is wonderful” he said , “ He's done more things than any man I know.”⁴ Although , he seems voluble , whereas Flem is silent , we are specifically told that Ratliff always did , “ a good deal more listening than anybody believed till afterward.”⁵ In virtually all he says and does , Ratliff exemplifies his interest in people and their active values . He involves himself with the Snopeses and Snopesism only through purposeful and morally impelled acts of volition – removing Ike's cow , his partnership with Wall , helping Gavin sanction Linda's marriage and the like. On the contrary , Gavin Stevens is concerned only with those who somehow touch his life – he does not simply hate Snopesism for its evil power , he is obsessed with it .

¹ Ibid , 29

² Ibid

³ Ibid , 321

⁴ James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate eds. *Lion in the Garden : Interview with William Faulkner (1926-1962)* Random House . New York . 1968. P 224

⁵ *The Hamlet* , p 13

In the early stages of his relationship with the Snopeses , Ratliff experiences some trouble in understanding them , but it is during the long and involved goat episode that Ratliff begins to realise that Flem unlike Ab Snopes cannot be explained by theories of warped human motivation . Ratliff tries to outwit Flem and collect a note Flem owes to Snopes cousin. But as Flem manoeuvres around the payment , Ratliff begins to comprehend just how crafty Flem is , the following lines clarify this subject matter as such :

I just never went far enough he thought . I quit too soon . I went as far one Snopes barn and both Snopeses know it , and that was all right . But I stopped there . I never went on to where that first Snopes will turn around and stomp the fire out so he can sue the second Snopes for the reward and both Snopeses know that too.¹

As the power and the brazen-ness of the Snopes clan continues , Ratliff prepares to take the Snopes menace with absolute seriousness and begins to observe Flem's continued rise in the world with all the analytical insight he has . As the idiot Isaac Snopes is carrying on his bucolic love affair with the cow , Lump soon finds a way to turn his cousin's amours into a sideshow . Ratliff must close that engagement , not because he necessarily abhors Ie's depravity but because he is upset by the titillation the boys compulsions have engendered in the peeping crowd . However , Flem uses the idiot for material gain , Ratliff treats him as a subject of special compassion . Taking the initiative at once , he forces the Snopes clan to buy the cow and part of the beef fed to the idiot to cure him of his affliction . Ratliff takes overt and public action , as he explains to Mrs. Little John , not because he is any better than the idiot but simply because " I am stronger than him , Not righter . Not better , maybe . But just stronger . What really bothers Ratliff , is the willingness of the village folks to allow Flem to prey on them . Protesting strongly against the complacency and passivity of the people , he says :

Snopes can come and Snopes can go ... take your pick ... of with the old and on with the new ; the old job at the old stand , maybe a new fellow doing the jobbing but it's the same stern getting renamed out?²

¹ Ibid , 88

² Ibid , 162

But it is no mere protestations that Ratliff indulges in , he definitely performs concrete and constructive actions . As Mink Snopes shoots Zack Houston dead from an ambush and is serving a life sentence for the killing , it is left as usual for Ratliff to do what he can . By bringing Mink's wife , a backwoods ex-prostitute and her two small children into his own house , Ratliff acts upon what he believes is right . Equally essential , of course , is the courage and moral commitment which Ratliff displays when he decides to actively challenge Flem in a bid to stop his progress by the infliction of a resounding economic defeat .

It has been said that Ratliff's defeat by Flem in the final section of *The Hamlet* makes his character a "marred triumph"¹ since it is not credible that Ratliff who knows Flem so well and has so vigorously expressed his contempt and understanding should at least be fooled by him and betrayed by his own avarice . It is true that Ratliff had never " for one moment believed that the Old Frenchman place had no value."² But what needs to be said is that , even Ratliff unfortunately is gullible enough to be taken in by Flem's trick of planting treasure in the field . He buys the property at a considerable price , hoping to outsmart Flem , only to discover later that he had been fooled .

After several nights of fruitless digging , the old qualities of scepticism and analysis reassert themselves and Ratliff soon establishes beyond all question that they have been taken. But unlike Armstid , whatever else Ratliff may have lost , he has still retained his sanity , balance and a sense of reality . What is more important is to see how Ratliff reacts to the discovery of his error . It is essential to realize that Ratliff's economic defeat is not accompanied by any defeat in human terms . Ratliff's strength appears in the very moment of his realisation of Flem's victory , as he lingers luxuriously over his breakfast before resuming the digging which he already knows to be fruitless : " we even got a new place to dig."³ He thinks with a humour which is not destroyed and a little later , as he bets Bookwright that he himself will have in his sack the oldest of the coins by which both have been deluded . Once again , as Michael Millgate observes :

¹ Irving Howe. William Faulkner , A Critical Study . Random House . New York . 1951 , p 183

² *The Hamlet* , p 179

³ *Ibid* , 359

It is this capacity of combining decency and moral solicitude with clear eyed intellectual detachment which gives Ratliff the ability to survive defeat and to continue , not merely the struggle against Snopesian , but the perpetual affirmation of life .¹

In a nutshell , it can be argued that Ratliff , though subject to human error , seeks and obeys the spirit of an enduring moral code derived from nature . By acting in the living present , by engaging in evil to expose and defeat it , Ratliff maybe outwitted but never overwhelmed by the devastating Snopes . Since he acts out the best part of his humanity , he acts on behalf of mankind . Yet Ratliff never embodies omniscience and absoluteness ; his wisdom and understanding emerge from the context of moral confines .

In Ratliff's words “ fate and destiny , and not luck and hope ... and all of us mixed up in it ...I used to think that hope was about all folks he had , only now I am beginning to believe that that's about all anybody needs – just hope.”² Though Ratliff's role in *The Town*, and *The Mansion* is very restricted , he is the first to discover the ambiguous reversal to Flem's strategy by suggesting that he is seeking respectability more than wealth . By enlisting newer allies . Moreover , the recognition of impenetrability , of the unsuccessfulness of any final attempt to define , explain and predict Snopesism is the beginning of wisdom. The latter comes with the recognition of the futility of the desire for finality and necessary need for continual reassessment. This is the wisdom Ratliff has acquired from his experience . To this end , Faulkner's analysis of Ratliff confirms his intense belief that the only answer to human turmoil is acceptance and endurance .

6. Lena Grove

Lena Grove represents all that is positive in Faulkner's novel *Light in August* , she is painted as a simple and unsophisticated country girl who has an abundance of strength and determination . More than this , Lena is a representative of pure motion , tranquillity ,

¹ Michael Millgate . *The Achievement of William Faulkner* . Random House. New York. 1966. P 199

² *The Hamlet* , p146

natural, comfortable and inevitable , completely in harmony with the motion of life. Pursuing her tranquil way steadily across the face of the Mississippi . In total contrast to her rebellious sister Dewey Dell in *Light in August* , Lena is “ waging a mild battle with the providential caution of the old earth of and with and by which she lives.”¹

Lena Grove embodies those crucial and permanent attributes and ethical values that Faulkner so frequently and so powerfully affirmed , the values of patience , endurance and simple faith . Being a child of nature , the patterns of her life cycle are in tune with the rhythm and flux of her natural environment . It is plainly evident that Faulkner admires her . By way of illustration , in an interview , as an answer to a question concerning whether his characters carry a sense of submission to their fate , Faulkner commented on Lena Grove as follows :

I would say that Lena Grove coped pretty well with hers . It didn't matter to her in her destiny whether her man was Lucas Burch or not . It was her destiny to have a husband and children and she knew it , and so she went out and attended to it without asking help from anyone . She was the captain of her soul . One of the calmest , sanest speeches I ever heard was when she said to Byron Bunch at the very instant of repulsing his final desperate and despairing attempt at rape. “ Ain't you ashamed? You might have woke the baby.” She was never for one moment confused , frightened , alarmed . She did not even know that she didn't need pity.²

In the schematic world of Jefferson , she introduces by virtue of her own intellectual limitations and pregnancy , the world of nature with its total indifference to moral and social categories . She depicts the ordinary naive mankind inviolably innocent because it cannot enter the realm of abstract ideas . Lena's unshakable faith in the natural order of things becomes apparent . Her serenity and her very insentience to the violent and unnatural events of Jefferson indicate that the life force she represents will continue unimpeded despite the distorting distractions of human time and space .

Having gotten pregnant and having been deserted by her lover , she feels it is her duty to pursue him and provide her unborn child with a father . She does not hide or become embarrassed by the fact that she is unmarried and pregnant , but begins at once to do what she feels she must and that is to walk , though nine months pregnant , and find her man so they

¹ William Faulkner . *Light in August* . Penguin Books Ltd. New York.1983p 10

² Malcolm Cowley . *Writers at Work : the Paris Review Interview* . Viking Press , New York. 1958

can marry before the baby comes . As Richard Chase , an influential critic , describes her thusly :

Lena Grove is one of those intensely female females we meet in Faulkner's books , like Eula Varner in *The Hamlet* . A somewhat bovine earthmother , she has all those womanly qualities which , as Faulkner likes to point out , baffle , fascinate , outrage and finally defeat men . According to Faulkner's gynaecological demonology ... men are more interesting and valuable than women but the dark or Satanic principle of the universe decrees that they are the weaker sex and are doomed to be frustrated and ephemeral ... In Lena's unvarying inner harmony all opposites and disparates are reconciled or perhaps rendered meaningless . By implying that Lena Grove somehow symbolizes this ideal unity Faulkner suggests no metaphysical reconciliation. He merely praises again the quiet enduring stoicism and wisdom of the heart which he finds among the poor whites , Negroes and other socially marginal types .¹

Beyond a doubt , Lena Grove appears to be the most harmoniously conceived and drawn character in *Light in August* . More than this , it is worthy of note to state the Lena holds the novel together , by enfolding it in monumental serenity . In order to project this reality , Andre Bleikestan endorses this idea as such :

In a tenderly humorous way *Light in August* is indeed an homage to Woman , an invocation to Venus ... Lena is the radiant figure at the novel's gates , and from one to another her trajectory draws a straight line , as economical as light itself – a straight line which would be at the same time the most accomplished circle .²

Representing the pivotal force , her passage through Jefferson resuscitates and fecundates the dead spring of life . She bears and brings light into the human landscape darkened by hatred , apathy and violence . She comes as a stranger but soon . As she experiences the pain of childbirth , she is depicted as unafraid : “ she sits quiet , still hearing

¹ Richard Chase . *The American Novel and Its Tradition* .Doubleday and Company Inc .New York . 1954 , p 212-213

² Andre Bleikasten .” In Praise of Helen” in *Faulkner and Women* , eds . Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. University Press of Mississippi. Jackson and London . 1986 , p 128

and feeling the implacable and immemorial earth , but without fear or alarm”¹ According to Faulkner , this peaceful belief and trust of an expectant mother is a religious state . Lenais never torn by doubts and indecisions , never baffled as to what course of action to take , never suffers from frustration and alienation . Harshness of spirit and rigidity of principles are completely alien to her .

An essential reality about most of Faulkner's characters is that they can neither escape nor reconcile themselves to the fact they inhabit a world of time and change . Lena Grove , conversely , lives in a timeless realm which seems at once eternity and the present moment . She is fully content with the moment which she occupies and the bliss of being in it . As the book opens , she reflects “ Although I have not been quite a month on the road , I am already in Mississippi”² and as it ends , she affirms “ Here we ain't been coming from Alabama but two months and now it's already Tennessee”³

Correspondingly , it is plainly evident that Lena knows no other reality beyond her subjective moment . Indeed , the duration of time for her is not measured by the clocks and calendars of man , but solely by the elemental impulses and responses of her nature to the immediate surroundings . Her journey does not terminate at Jefferson , but takes the form of linear progression , to quote her words “ like something moving forever and without progress across an urn.”⁴ As a matter of fact , it is of essence to note that in Lena's unvarying inner harmony , all opposites and disparities are reconciled or rendered meaningless . The adjectives which are repeatedly associated with her are : “ peaceful ” , “ tranquil ” , “ innocent ” , “ profound ” , “ motionless” , “ quiet ” .

As a further matter , it can be argued that Lena's nature is one which allows her to commune with other people . Even the women who look upon her swollen body with evident disapproval offer their coins to help her and the community of which she eventually becomes a part rallies to help her. Unlike the principal male characters in the novel , she does not suffer from frustration and alienation . She becomes a part of the community to which she comes as a stranger , without force or difficulty .

¹ *Light in August* , p24

² *Ibid* , 05

³ *Ibid* , 381

⁴ *Ibid* , 08

More importantly , however , Lena appears to be the means through which other characters are brought back into the community and to life . In other words , Lena is the pivotal vehicle by which Byron Bunch and Hightower are inspired into responsible action , being partially if not completely redeemed from their half-pallid lives and brought back into the community . Before Lena's arrival , Byron Bunch is virtually isolated from the community . His only acquaintance is the Rev . Gail Hightower , who is also a outcast , completely isolated from the group . Merely by her simple questions and concern for others , Lena forces Byron to become involved with the living . After revealing to her the identity of Joe Brown , Lucas Burch , he often feels responsible for her . This feeling of responsibility draws Byron out of his lethargic existence and forces him back into the community . Having lived as a celibate for more than thirty years , he now becomes involved with another person . Not only he prepare for Lena's child and act as er protector but he falls in love and changes to a person committed to living a full life

Furthermore , Lena is also the means – though more indirectly – by which Rev Hightower is redeemed . Her creative power has a profound effect on him , for she leads him to a spiritual state he could never achieve within his inflexible design . Much like Quentin Compson , Hightower had tried wilfully to impose a kind of order on the irrational flow of nature and consequently refuses to be involved in any current crisis . For once , he is not seen running backwards , the act of delivering Lena's child , though forced upon him , becomes symbolic of his restoration to life . Indeed , Hightower's contact with her and with the act of reproduction accomplishes in him a momentary revival of the spirit of life . As he walks back to town , he notices the peaceful and fecund aspects of nature for the first time in a long time :

“I must do this more often ,” he thinks , feeling the intermitten sun , the heat , smelling the savage and fecund odor of the earth , the woods , the loud silence ... It seems to him that he can see , feel , about him the ghosts of rich fields , and of the rich fecund black of the quarters , the mellow shouts , the presence of fecund women , the prolific naked children in the dust before the doors .¹

¹ *Light in August* , p 384-385

Everything combines to make Hightower realize the miracle of life and to acknowledge that “ life comes to the old man yet”¹ This act of involvement , precipitated by Lena’s presence has restored Hightower to the human race .To this end , it can be said that Lena brought life , then both literally and figuratively to the community of Jefferson .

As the novel opens , Lena sets out on a pilgrimage , unhurriedly searching for the father of her child riding from one wagon to another till she reaches Jefferson . During her sojourn there , she gives birth to a baby and embarks on a rootless journey . Like Faulkner’s other benevolent figures , Lena takes life as it comes , without trying vainly to understand or complicate it and probably this encouraged Faulkner’s controversial critic Irving Howe to refer to her as “ the good unruffled vegetable”² Nevertheless , Lena is able to comprehend the whole of her world with ‘ a single glance , all embracing swift innocent and profound.’³

Sensing her own oneness with the order of creation , Lena has no reason to fear life . She has been through a lot as she could endure great hardships with regard to the eerily loss of her parents , a poverty stricken youth , desertion and betrayal by her own lover and yet she is free of anxiety . Her repose which she considers as her strength is born of her energy and vitality and her instinctive engagement with life . Even the search for the father of her child is more a matter of instinct than morality . A good way to point up this idea is to examine Faulkner’s words , he comments : “ She was never ashamed of that child whether it had any father or not , she was simply going to follow the conventional laws of time in which she was and finds its father”⁴

As a matter of fact , Lena’s faith which enables her to endure seems to be stemming from the past . Lena’s roots are strongly and deeply rooted in the past . She represents a heritage available to every man , but the choice must be made between perpetuating the curse of the past by further violence or enduring evil and holding onto what has been good in tradition , to human dignity , kindness and fidelity which to some extent mitigates the evil . Her strong belief that a “ family ought to be altogether when a chap comes”⁵ is a powerful assurance that it will be. There is a part of Lena which knows that Burch is a scoundrel but

¹ Ibid , 383

² Irving Howe , op cit , 205

³ *Light in August* , 08

⁴ Fredrick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner , op cit , 199

⁵ *Light in August* , p 18

she is not bothered with rationalizing the difference between this knowledge and her larger faith . Lea beholds a world she cannot imagine as hostile .

In a similar vein , it can also be argued that Lena's transparent goodness protects her as invincibly as her very trust removes her from the need for protection . she has a peculiar power to evoke from other various reflections of her own gentleness and compassion . Indeed , wherever she goes , she relies on human fellowship and it responds to her trust by giving her what she needs . Moreover , it can be said that the female principle embodied in Lena is a force for good rather than a source of conflict for the novel's male characters . Cleanth Brooks provides a comprehensive clarification for this subject matter thusly :

Lena is one of Faulkner's several embodiments of the female principle – indeed ,one of the purest and least complicated of his embodiments . Her rapport with nature is close ... She is never torn by doubts and indecisions . There is no painful introspection . This serene composure has frequently been put down to sheer mindlessness , and Lena , to be sure , is a very simple young woman . But Faulkner himself undoubtedly attributes most of Lena's quiet force to her female nature ... In the Faulknerian world men have to lose their innocence , confront the hard choice , and through a process of initiation discover reality . But women are already in possession of this knowledge , naturally and instinctively . In *Light in August* the principal male characters suffer alienation. They are separated from the community , are in rebellion against it - against nature . But Lena moves serenely into the community and it gathers itself about her with protective gestures ... Lena embodies the principle upon which any human community is founded. She is the carrier of life , and she has to be protected and nurtured if there is to be any community at all.¹

As the novel closes with the actions of Lena just as it has opened with her . This strong emphasis on Lena leads the reader , at least momentarily , from the horrifying tragedy of Joe Christmas , to the renewal of life as painted in Lena's baby . Primitives like Lena Grove are indeed akin potential sources for renewal and development .

¹ Cleanth Brooks , op cit , 67-68

Light in August anticipates tremendously Faulkner's statement that man will not merely endure but prevail. Indeed, Lena by exhibiting her calm and confident onward travel at the end of the novel, she prevails not by her understanding but mainly by her complacent trust in others and as Richardson rightly observes: "Mankind does not end with the death of the son of Man, for through Lena there is another life, another man, another chance..."¹

7. Dilsey

Dilsey, the black loyal servant in Faulkner's novel *The Sound and The Fury*, attracts attention with her wisdom and distinguished manners as she serves as one of Faulkner's most admirable primitives. She rivals any of his other characters in her unselfish love for her fellowmen, more than this, she relentlessly pursues the course of positive action by choice. Dilsey's life is a simple one, she scarcely leaves the Compson household except to church on Sunday. She does not fret over things she cannot possess someday. As a result of her unflinching patience and intense faith in God, she is rendered as the only figure that can be considered as undefeated by the curse that surrounds the Compsons.

It is in the noble character of Dilsey that one finds that life is not without its value and meaning. The Compsons have moved into a world of disorderliness and confusion. But Dilsey manages to stand as an ethical norm close to her world of values through her love, affection, compassion and tolerance for all those who are around her. She displays a strong enduring faith in God and virtue in man. It is her faith that helps her to face all the calamities that confront the Compson household with calmness.

Unavoidably, Dilsey's admirable features play an outsized role within the bonds of the Compson household. In fact, she is painted as the only character who maintains the integrity of the family. Dilsey is totally immersed in the stream of humanity, yet her loyalty and earnestness overburden her in her handling of the Compson household. Along with her responsibility of maintaining the order of the house, Dilsey takes care of the Compson siblings as if they were her own children. Loyal and uncomplainingly, she obeys the

¹ Kenneth Richardson. *Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner*. Monton, Hague. 1967, p 96

absurd commands of Mrs. Compson , to cite an instance , when the latter asks her to cook breakfast and to get Benjy dressed , Dilsey bows her head and listens .

In the same regard , Dilsey's ability to stand unwavering in the face of circumstances finds further expression in her patient preoccupation with the present . Dilsey's endurance is tested by the frivolous and inconsiderate demands made upon her by the Compsons . Although Mrs. Compson does nothing but whine and complain throughout the novel , she consistently reminds everyone in the novel , including Dilsey , that :

You're not the only one who has to bear it ." Mrs. Compson said , " It's not your responsibility . You can go away . You don't have to bear the brunt of it day in and day out . You owe nothing to them , to Mr. Compson's memory . I know you have never had any tenderness for Jason. You've never tried to conceal it ."

Dilsey said nothing . she turned slowly and descended , lowering her body from step to step , as a small child does , her hand against the wall.¹

In light of this , it can be argued that the above cited quotation is ironic . As it is important to highlight the fact that Mrs. Compson is totally incorrect in her whining , for Dilsey does bear the responsibility of the whole family . Indeed she is the hub around which the family revolves . Never does she shirk her duties , for she knows that she must remain close to mankind , as Edmond Volpe affirms " her source of strength is her humanity"² Another way to explore this reality is to examine the following words by Olga Vickery which clarify vividly that the burden is unmistakably on Dilsey :

By working with circumstance instead against it she creates order out of disorder ; by accommodating herself to change she manages to keep the Compson household in some semblance of decency . While occupied with getting breakfast , she is yet able to start the fire in Luster's inexplicable absence , provide a hot water bottle for Mrs. Compson , see to Benjy's needs, and soothe various ruffled tempers .All this despite the constant interpretations of Luster's perverseness , Benjy's moaning , Mrs. Compson's

¹ *The Sound and the Fury* , p 339

² Edmond Volpe , op cit , 124

complaints , and even Jason's maniacal fury . The same calmness is evident with regard to Caddy's affair , Quentin's suicide and the arrival of Caddy's baby .¹

Unquestionably , Dilsey was given a servile status assigned to her , but she has more dignity and compassion than does the decadent society that surrounds her . She becomes the symbol of motherhood for all families and all races . Because she has the instinct to care for those who are in the image of God , whether their skins are light or dark or their minds well or sick , she has strength that all human beings must have in some degree in order to be able to live with and beyond themselves in time . Stressing on the significance of Dilsey's presence in the Compson household , Elizabeth Hardwick opines :

There are no Dilseys today , neither in the South nor in the North , neither black nor white and Faulkner's immense loving memorial to the Negro servant is not only a remarkable creative achievement but a contribution to social history , a painstaking study of lost relationships which will appear , a few generations from now as queer and archaic to the American as the role of a duenna .²

Against the moral and physical degeneration of the Compsons , Faulkner has placed Dilsey. She is the strength and the oracle of her own family . For so many years , her great vigour held her own family together , with a generous amount left over to help those she served and was devoted to , regardless of their inability to cope with their own circumstances. In her acceptance of life as it is , she proves to be a steadying influence. Nevertheless , the Compsons seem to have no idea of her true value and their dependence . It is only near the close of the novel that Jason finally recognizes the position as titular head of the family which Dilsey has of necessity accepted .

In *Light in August* , Faulkner uses Lena to emphasize an ideal of integrity and wholeness in the light of which alienated characters are judged . In *The Sound and the Fury*, it is the decent , sympathetic and responsible Dilsey who provides the coherence and moral

¹ Olga Vickery , op cit , 50-51

² Elizabeth Hardwick . Faulkner and the South Today . Critical Essays .The Parisian Review . 1948 , p230

principles against which the Compsons are by implication judged . Thus , Dilsey exemplifies the positive and creative aspects of life , Olga Vickery endorses this point , she affirms that Dilsey represents : “ the ethical norm , the realizing and acting out of one’s humanity , it is from this that the Compsons have deviated , each into his separate world.”¹

Representing the only things that are completely good , she becomes a tower of strength upon which each one depends more than he realizes . She had never lived with nor known any other people , and although she frequently disapproved of their actions or attitudes, she never would countenance criticism by anyone , most other white folks being in her mind “ white trash ” . Her penetrating mind had catalogued each Compson in his childhood , and as her long life spanned five generations , she had observed at close range their habits , their desires , their needs and their failures .

As a freed slave , she had worked as a household servant , seeing Mr. Compson in an alcoholic dream of past glories along with Mrs. Comspon , the ineffective head of family . Her children grew up with those of Miss Caroline and Mr. Jason , playing , eating , sleeping , thinking and doing exactly the same thing that all little white and Negro children had been doing through all the past paternalistic generations . However , she sees in both her own and the Compson children the changes that times are bringing . In her own family , she observes the “ new freedom ” as it appears in Frony’s marriage and life in St Louis , in the jobs Versh gets in town , in TP’s secretive and periodic trips to Memphis . She does her best to hold Luster in the traditional pattern and there seems little doubt that he will stray .

In the same vein , Dilsey saw the Compson children grow to adulthood in the patterns they developed as children when they lacked discipline and spiritual guidance in a generation of unstable values . She saw their selfish desires lead Quentin to his doom in self blame and suicide , and Caddy to an escape in promiscuous living , salving her conscience only occasionally with a momentary substitute for family responsibilities . She saw Benjy taken to the State Asylum at Jackson , having little , losing nothing because “ as with his sister, he remembered not the pasture but only its loss , and firelight was still the same bright shape as sleep .”²

¹ Olga Vickery , op cit , 32

² *The Sound and the Fury* , p 20

In addition to Dilsey's closeness to the ungrateful Compson family , she also demonstrates her oneness with humanity by never judging anyone . She regards most of the Compsons with contempt , it is not due to the act that they are representative of the ruling social group , but more particularly because they do not fulfil their obligations that have been accrued to their status . By judging the whites in terms of their own proclaimed values , she criticizes their moral mistreatment of each other . As highlighted previously in the preceding chapter , Mrs. Compson and Caddy are portrayed as fallen and unfaithful mothers who refuse to accept their responsibilities as they have abandoned their children . On the other hand , Dilsey is crystallized as the true mother of the household as her maternal impulses envelop them all , black and white , to quote her words , she avows “ Ef I don't worry 'bout y'll , I don't know who is”¹

By the same token , it can be said that Dilsey's life with its daily tasks and responsibilities is related to a larger life of eternity and eternal values . Her world is an intense and fruitful one , packed with pain , toil and difficulty but not wrenched by agonising doubts and perplexities . What is more , Dilsey , though a passive witness to the Compson decay , has remained the fixed centre of the household , taking over the maternal responsibilities abdicated by Mrs. Compson , caring for the spiritual and physical needs of the family . Ultimately , those most in need of love , are those to whom she most generously devotes her charitable care . Mrs. Compson is a hypochondriac mother and her demands cause Dilsey much extra work , yet Dilsey as a good hearted and loyal servant never complains or discusses Mrs. Compson's behaviour with anyone .

The most heart-warming instance that demonstrates Dilsey's immense concern for her fellowmen is her care and love for the idiot Benjy . Mrs. Compson considers her son Benjy as a curse , for Jason he is an unnecessary expense and according to Miss Quentin , Benjy is a repulsive annoyance . Apart from Caddy , Dilsey is the one who insists upon Benjy's humanity , providing him with the necessary supervision and affection he is in need of . As the only person who cares about Benjy's birthday , Dilsey makes a cake for him with the ingredients that she buys with her own money . When her daughter complains that people talk when she brings Benjy to the church , Dilsey replies “ Tell um de good lawd don't keer whether he smart er not , dont't nobody but white trash keer dat.”²

¹ Ibid , 59

² Ibid , 258

The same devotion and love is maintained by Dilsey in her treatment of Caddy's illegitimate child . After Caddy has given birth to Miss Quentin , the latter is brought back to the Compson home . Dilsey willingly accepts her saying “ I raised all of them and I reckon I can raise one more.”¹ Nevertheless , Mrs. Compson laments the baby's illegitimacy , Jason , on the other hand , complains that the baby's upkeep will be his responsibility . Dilsey , responds “ and whar else do she belongs .? ...Who gwine raise her ‘ cep me ? Aint I raised eve'y one of y'all.”² In the same spirit , it can be argued that Dilsey's concern for the baby is based on the child's humanity , not its kinship to her . When Caddy wants to see her infant , Dilsey allows her to see little Miss Quentin , for Dilsey feels compassion and concern for Caddy as a fellow human being . As Miss Quentin grows , Dilsey protects her from Jason maniacal fury : “ Now , now ” , she says , “ He ain't gwine so much as lay his hand on you while Ise here.” Such are Dilsey's words falling in scene after scene , lending to the novel her solid presence , threatening , comforting , giving endlessly of herself to counter the very events which undo the Compsons . But , in her endurance , Dilsey has the strength to suffer without rancor as well as to resist , to accept as well as to protest . Neither a philosopher , nor a fool , Dilsey not only fights the battle but wins it.

Dilsey's experience with other people helps her possess the second trait of the benevolent figures with regard to seeing life as tragic . In this manner , Dilsey appears to be a realist , she faces Benjy's handicap , when Mrs. Compson calls Benjy a baby , Dilsey responds “ you calling that thing a baby ... A man big as T.P.”³ Dilsey's goodness of heart is revealed not through her words , but through her actions because the deed is the truth of the heart .

According to Faulkner , those who articulate their interpretation of acts use meaningless words and those who do not talk of love usually have profound experiences which cannot be communicated in language . When it comes to Dilsey , words have a divergent power : “ My name has been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they long forget me.”⁴ And so , the name and the word for her have a meaning which transcends the individual , the immediate and the human . She does not talk of truth , yet she knows that the words of truth like her name are written in the book of life .

¹ Ibid , 73

² Ibid , 154

³ *The Sound and the Fury* , p 06

⁴ Ibid , 58

Additionally , Dilsey's endurance is tested not in acts of magnificent heroism , but mainly in her submission to the trivial and inconsiderate demands made upon her by the Compson family . While occupied in preparing breakfast , she is yet able to start a fire in Luster's absence , provide a hot water bottle for Mrs. Compson and see Benjy's needs despite the annoying interruptions of Mrs. Compson's whining , Benjy's moaning and Jason's temper .

Within the Compson household , every action demands her full attention and excessive physical effort , yet her spirit seems unlimited and indomitable . By recreating in details Dilsey's routine , evoking the qualities required in performing such duties , Faulkner brings to the surface Dilsey's powerful positive presence . Dilsey's attitude is shaped by the feeling that though life is tragic , yet it should be faced with courage and dignity . She exemplifies a powerful portrayal of the conscious human who accepts the limitations of herself , the boundaries of circumstances .

A worth mentioning fact about Dilsey is her submission to time by preserving the values of the past and responding to the values of the present . In doing so , she is able to adjust to time and history without permitting them to defeat her . Dilsey's faith allows her to adhere fully to all of time's dimensions . This is apparent in her answer to the past which is fidelity , the present she endures with patience and humility and aimed with the virtue of hope, she is able to face the future without fear or alarm .

Indeed , in contrast to the Compsons who cannot pass beyond their exhausted prominence , Dilsey appreciates time within its true value . Thus , with her religious prospects, she appears as the only exception in *The Sound and the Fury* who is able to reconcile with the concept of time , and hence , she can cope with the past and the present . In this manner , Dilsey's insight and piousness enable her to be at peace with time . The most significant event which illustrates best this situation is the Easter¹ Sunday sermon which is presented by Reverend Shegog² . An action of endurance in Dilsey's journey to the church with Frony³ , Luster and Benjy . Dilsey , the Compson's maid , must attempt to salvage the

¹ Easter Sunday is also known as the " Feast of Resurrection" is one of the most important religious feasts in Christianity .

² Reverend Shegog is a visiting preacher . His sermon is about the sacrificial death of Christ.

³ Frony is Dilsey's daughter , Luster is Frony's son , meaning Dilsey's grandson .

ruins of the Compsons . In fact , she is the prophet who has seen the beginning of the Compson family and now foresees their cruel degeneration and sad end .

It is of essence to state that Faulkner employs a sample of the love that is absent in the Compson family when Dilsey takes Benjy to church on Easter Sunday . The preacher Reverend Shegog , speaks to the congregation about love until : “ ... there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words .”¹ Dilsey offers Benjy the love and patience he has been denied . Temporarily , he can find some solace and a restoration of order in his dreary existence through Dilsey .

The Easter service in the black church provides an atmosphere of love , innocence and purity . Faulkner intends to emphasize the supportive quality of Dilsey . She is effective , orderly and in touch with reality , with no interest in making false pretensions . Dilsey's presence allows the reader to view the tragedy of the Compsons more clearly . Quentin makes a remark about blacks early in the novel that can be used to further clarify Dilsey's presence “ come into white people's lives ... in sudden sharp trickles that isolate white facts for an instant in unarguable truth like under a microscope .”²

Correspondingly , Dilsey's faithfulness becomes clearer during the sermon , she is deeply moved. Reverend Shegog had spoken directly to Dilsey , and she knew she was seeing the prophecy comes true within the Compson household . Dilsey becomes no longer a member of one race , black or white . She is simply a member of the human race , and race , as a differentiation is absorbed in her compassion as a human being , a mother , seeing life widely and wisely and well .

The last attribute of the primitive figures appears in Dilsey's acceptance of the tragedy , out of her suffering comes into view a code of living based on optimistic acceptance. As highlighted formerly , in Dilsey's perspective , virtue lies in her feeling that whatever happens must be met with courage and dignity in which “ there is no room for passivity or pessimism.”³ First and foremost , she illuminates her positive acceptance by continuing to work and take care of the Compsons . Despite her ill-treatment , Dilsey still willingly manages the household . In point of fact , Dilsey's continued care for sickly Mrs. Compson ,

¹ *The Sound and the Fury* , p 367

² *Ibid* , 211

³ Olga Vickery , op cit , 48

the idiot Benjy , the selfish Quentin , and the unbearable Jason certainly elucidate her strong capacity to endure . Her everyday routine filled with responsibilities and endless tasks hints at her optimism .

Dilsey's optimistic attitude toward life in general surfaces in other areas as well . There is a fictional instance that projects this point , when one of the Compson siblings , Quentin is contemplating suicide , he imagines Dilsey will say : “ what a sinful waste”¹ Certainly , his assumption is correct . She would loath suicide because this action would not fulfil man's role . In her philosophy , man should continue to struggle – to endure .

To give up is to admit defeat when man should be strong and work through problems. Dilsey tries to do the best she knows , and she does not worry at all , since would be senseless . Cleanth Brooks avows : “ Dilsey does not have to strain to make meaningful some particular desire or dream or need . Her world is solid and meaningful . It is filled with pain , toil , and difficulty , but it is not wrenched by agonizing doubts and perplexities.”²

In the same respect , it can be said that Dilsey appears to be the novelist's most loved character because she embodies the qualities that make for permanence , qualities that transcend race . She never performs a single act for which she has personal regret . She sees where others fail and does her part to sustain them or make up for their weaknesses . She wields a strong disciplinary hand on the children who are her responsibility during the time they are under her care . She is a sort of Biblical maternal figure who can see back into time and forward into space , loving all men as her children , and content to leave her own destiny in the hands of her own Maker .

Though the Compson family has fallen , Dilsey represents a source of hope . She has constantly tolerated Mrs. Compson's self-pity , Jason's cruelty , and Benjy's frustrating incapacity . While the Compsons crumble around her , Dilsey emerges as the only character who has successfully resurrected the values that the Compsons have long abandoned like hard work , endurance , love of family and religious faith . Undeniably , in the face of despair , Dilsey becomes the true face of hope for the family's future. She remains the grounded and unpretentious , which enables her to face the world with her chin up .

¹ *The Sound and the Fury* , p 70

² Cleanth Brooks . *Faulkner's Vision of Good and Evil* . *The Massachusetts Review* , 3 (1962) , 711

While various forms of mental illness have destroyed leaders in the Compson family, Dilsey's routine of cooking and cleaning restores order and enables them all to function. She cares for Benjy with genuine joy, feeling that he is special in the eye of God, rather than a source of embarrassment to his family. Her lack of false pride allows her to make these choices and provides a path for the family's future. Ironically, Dilsey represents both the lowest-ranking household members and the heroic saviour that they all need.

Furthermore, Dilsey, in *The Sound and the Fury*, represents the men and women who prevail. She seems as the one constant, pleasant person among all the characters in the novel, quite distinct from the others because she is not self-absorbed, but loving. In his interview with Stein, Faulkner states that Dilsey is one of his favourite characters because she is brave, courageous, generous, kind and mainly honest.

While Quentin is weak, Dilsey is strong and while Jason is tight-fisted and uncharitable, she is generous; while Mrs. Compson is self-absorbed, Dilsey is charitable and sacrificial; while the clocks in the Compson home are always wrong, she always knows what time it is. and while Mrs. Compson insists that she is a "lady", Dilsey seems to be so, meaning that she represents the stability within a devastated household.

Dilsey, immersed in a community, holding fast to a message of hope and perseverance, stand out above the Compsons as fully alive. "Again Dilsey's mournful words "I seed de beginning, en now I sees de endin." ¹ and weeping as she realizes that she has witnessed the beginning of this generation of Compsons, and she now foresees their demise. Their tragic ending is one that Dilsey can understand since she too has been a part of their existence. Dilsey's comprehension of the Compson tragedy proves that she understands the tragic nature of life and accepts it, even if sadly.

In the final analysis, it can be said that the importance of Dilsey grows out from her being the only source of stability in the novel. The atmosphere she creates is reminiscent of the notion of permanence. Correspondingly, in the Appendix, the only statement under the title "DILSEY" is "They endured". As endurance can be considered as an indication of hope, it can be argued that Faulkner implies his desire to revive the values of Southern morality by placing Dilsey in the "last promise of life beyond time, beyond history."²

¹ *The Sound and the Fury*, p 371

² John Matthews, op cit, 82

Consequently , her broad perspective on life distinguishes her from the other characters in the novel . Therefore, Dilsey becomes Faulkner's only hope to perpetuate the history of his region.

It is worthy of not to state that according to Faulkner , Dilsey cannot be considered as a saviour . She is necessarily present ; however , she cannot prevent the tragedy which the South undergoes . She only appears as the representative of an order within the degenerating atmosphere of her environment and she can only exist to perpetuate the system of slavery , which is the basis of the Southern aristocracy . Indeed , the redemption Faulkner envisions for the Southern aristocracy can be regarded as ironic .

Last but not least , Dilsey represents man as he most successfully exists in the world. Everyone , including Dilsey , has to live with ' the sound and the fury' of life , yet by living as the benevolent does , man will be happier and better fulfilled . Dilsey gives a final perspective , for she is Faulkner's tool and privilege to express a final insight about the tragic decay of the Compsons . Man has hope , Dilsey is this hope.

It is in the characters like Molly , Ratliff , Lena and Dilsey who in the midst of Faulkner's novels of chaos could manage to survive . Their stories are bathed in warm sunlight and packed with images of timelessness and affirmation . It is with these self -contained people that Faulkner artfully asserts that with " love and forbearance ... it is possible to experience life at once realistically and meaningfully."¹ These are good gentle and frequently happy people .

Unavoidably , they remain close to the concrete world of values as they are less perverted by abstractions and more honest in recognizing what is essential and elemental . Because of their flawless harmony with nature , they survive the torment of consciousness created in others by durational time . And this world of Dilsey , Lena , Ratliff and Molly becomes not merely a world Faulkner celebrates , yet also a mythic source of strength . They move smartly from known beginnings to known endings , always fully aware of the scope of history they are in the process of completing .

In the same spirit , Faulkner's mythical stage Yoknapatawpha is often perceived as a nightmarish fictional world , filled with greed and massive violence , full of tragedies ,

¹ John W. Hunt . William Faulkner : Art in Theological Tension . Syracuse University Press . New York . 1965, p 99

without any ethical centre and driving fast towards degeneration and disaster . Faulkner was a writer who clung persistently to his assumption in the incorporation of the individual human heart , who could the creation of Ratliff asserts : “ Mankind ain't evil , he just ain't got any sense.”¹

The Faulknerian character is neither philosophically determined nor totally defenceless. Thrown into the world without his volition , he ; nonetheless is free to permit it to frustrate him or – as in the case of the four benevolent characters studied and analyzed – seize it , grapple with it and force it to yield meaning . But after all , he can prevail only if he acknowledges and stands up to the fierce grimace of authentic existence .

As a strong believer in the ethics of total involvement , Faulkner holds that the present is not the individual's only responsibility . Past , present and future being inseparable , he is responsible for all three , which are actually one . Taking an adamant stand against irresponsibility and life-denial , Faulkner contends that the future ahead of man is not a reality except as it is lived in the present and that , man achieves meaning in life only by living the moment dynamically .

Conclusion

To acknowledge one's guilt and suffer voluntarily is the beginning of the recognition of one's moral strength . It is Faulkner's conception of a redemptive faith which he has

¹ *The Hamlet* , p 241

discovered through a dialectic and progressive consideration of creative and destructive forces. For Faulkner's vision is that of hope : man sinful but striving for the good , man shackled by bonds within and without him but aspiring to be free . At the University of Virginia , he continued to restate and emphasize his faith in man , in his words : “ what we need are people who will say , this is bad and I am going to do something about it . I am going to change it.”

A study of Faulkner's benevolent characters unveils a philosophy of life that looks beyond suffering to hope . Richard J. O'Dea evaluates Faulkner's world as follows :

In the dark woods of the modern novel , Faulkner is one of the few novelists who writes from a perspective of hope . He writes of violence , of human stupidity , of cruelty , of greed , of a brooding sense of evil in the universe , but in the midst of all this dark turmoil gleams a light , a hope that although most men fail , yet they are not doomed to failure and that in spite of all their petty vices and stupidities they will prevail .¹

To this end , it can be argued that man's prevailing , his ability to endure in spite of the world's tragedies , is a significant theme that holds the lion's share in Faulkner's body of fiction . The characters which exemplify this theme provide the positive force in Faulkner's works . In the same strain , Faulkner through a representation of various families in his fiction paints a vivid image of their lives which are full of tragedies , despair and frustration. As highlighted previously , the Compsons , the Sutpens or the Sartoris feel frustrated because they have lost faith in their old mores , in their old virtues . Interestingly , Faulkner invites the Negroes to watch the whites ' decay and dissolution .

A point worth mentioning is that a careful examination of the benevolent characters in Faulkner's cycle of fiction reveals that the blacks manage to survive healthily because of their strong faith in human values . In his book entitled *The World of William Faulkner* , Ward L. Miner endorses this point , he asserts that the blacks “ maintain their roots much better than do the whites ... the patience , kindness and durability of the negroes are the

¹ Richard J. O'Dea. Faulkner's Vestigial Art". *Renascence* , 21 (Autumn 1968) , p44

qualities that the whites have lost and now badly need”¹ It becomes apparent that Faulkner made a fantastic use of the Negro to emphasize the fact that it is only in one's regard and respect for the human values that one can hope to survive in this world .

Last but not least , it could be said with certainty that of his characters , Faulkner appears to admire those who are vital and natural , and who accept the physical facts of life simply or without difficulty . Indeed , he admires the courage and endurance of the characters he referred to as primitives who have a “ very fine belief in life , in the basic possibility for happiness and goodness.”²

¹ Ward L. Miner . The World of William Faulkner . Grove Press .New York . 1952 , p 30

² Fredrick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner , op cit , 97

General Conclusion

The last part of any thesis or dissertation is meant to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the main points highlighted in the preceding chapters . As any thesis comprises divergent points illuminated in a set of chapters ; therefore , layer upon layer of chief points , weighty data and quintessential fields of vision are gathered in a pithy succinct general conclusion .

At the outset , it is of utmost significance to emphasize the fact that every creative writer is the product of his circumstances , family , atmosphere , society and cultural inheritance . Understanding Faulkner's mind and background is quite essential to understand his fiction . Faulkner saw history as a tragedy and it was this sense of history as a tragedy that ultimately made Faulkner at one a penetrating critic of the South and a captive of its culture . Faulkner's authority as a guide to Southern history is by no means unimpeachable . He was careless with facts and blind to many issues . But beyond using his fiction to document his observations of his people , Faulkner was also at work probing the South's past and raising disturbing questions about it .

In the same strain , William Faulkner being consistently a Southerner of his own kind and a novelist of the South , is a literary genius who has painted what he has seen in the light of a temperament sensitive , comprehensive , and profound . From his contemplation of a region vexed with problems of peculiar complexity and difficulty he has developed a view of human life. Fundamentally , the violent spirit in the South is apparent in various degrees and contemplated in various moods by Faulkner's successful creation of characters . Faulkner is painfully conscious of the streak of sadism in his people , and he rendered his revulsion to it most powerfully in that great body of written art .

The root of all evil and the curse that surrounded the South have been exposed . The Civil War and the Reconstruction era left the South culturally and economically distinct and mainly isolated . What needs to be said is that the war between the sisters (states) only finished what had started much earlier . The Southern claim to a special position , its feeling of moral and cultural superiority and distinctiveness , and its chosen isolation have its roots as early as in the beginning of the 18th century . These feelings and the need to cultivate and preserve a certain type of community and individual perceived as being superior only recurred even stronger after the shameful defeat the South suffered . The gap between the

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North and the South depended the tensions enormously , and soon the extreme isolation and solitude became both voluntary and involuntary .

Faulkner speaks of the South under Reconstruction as “ a lightless and gutted an empty land.” He tends to perpetuate an image in his mind , an ideal picture of how the land and the people should be- a picture of painted , many-windowed houses , fenced fields , overflowing barns , eyes lighting up with recognition ; and always , being honest , he measures that picture against the land and people he has seen . And both pictures are not only physical but moral , for always in the background of his novels is a sense of moral standards and a feeling of outrage at their being violated or simply pushed aside . Seeing little hope in the future , he turns to the past , where he hopes to discover a legendary and recurrent pattern that will illuminate and lend dignity to the world about him .

The downfall during the Reconstruction era left a huge scar that has been hurting until present day . The unique situation and state first brought forth a literature that was mainly concerned with the conflict caused by a brutal , mostly Northern , antagonist but soon shifted to looking inward for the source of conflict , despair , and misery . Literature as form of art became a powerful tool and an expressive means of the peculiar Southern situation and its history of the war that had left the Southern landscape wounded and drained .

As a further matter , it can be said that Faulkner , in spite of the wide knowledge and use of Southern history , is not a historical novelist in the strict sense , any more than are other great writers who have in the past utilized historical materials for literary purposes . There was a period when Faulkner was broadly viewed as a sociologist or a regional historian and only secondly as an artist , but in the past decades this attitude has shifted . Faulkner has won a well deserved place among American authors as an artist concerned with man's enduring moral problems by writing about the region he knows best and dealing with some striking events that affected that region . Thus , Faulkner provides his works with a firm base from which to examine significant aspects of man in general .

Settings , such as time , place , physical characteristics of the surroundings and social circumstances provide essential information about a story's background and enable readers to better imagine how a story unfolds by relating its necessary physical details of each scene . Of all these settings , place is particularly important for creating a mental image of a literary work . It is no surprise that a great number of writers all over the world have long rendered

the relationship between people and place in different manners . In light of American literary history , Faulkner may be a good case in point , he had a tight connection with his local culture and birth-place .

Perhaps more closely than any other American writer , Faulkner echoed a fictional landscape out of his own physical surroundings , utilizing his created environment far more extensively than as a passive backdrop for his various characters. Thoroughly described and heavily symbolic , Faulkner’s mythical kingdom was a powerful device through which Faulkner could voice the unvoiced and remain at the same time distant to the critique of his own homeland . Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County derives its strength of character not only from its authenticity with the Northern Mississippi landscape – which Faulkner refers to as his hometown- but mainly from the way in which he breathes life into the land , crystallizing it through intense and often exhaustive description as a virtual character and a background .

In this manner , it is almost impossible to ignore Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha when one deals with the South. His fictional world is particularly influential to the subsequent Mississippi writers and puts pressure on them to compose meaningful literature . The history of American literature continues to show that the fiction of William Faulkner rose to the top. Indeed , in the American South , the region Eudora Welty called ‘ the cradle of storytellers’ , Faulkner is ranked at the summit . It has been said that Eudora Welty , who was born in Jackson , Mississippi , and spent most of her life there , once stated “ being in the same state with the phenomenal Faulkner ... was like living near a big mountain” On another occasion , she added “ as a writer ... I can never be better than second best in my home state of Mississippi”¹

The American Southern society which Faulkner beautifully portrayed in his literary compositions can be analyzed in a better light when one examines his masterpiece *The Sound and the Fury* . In course of its study , Faulkner renders the Compson family break down and consequently the disintegration of the Southern way of life . The third chapter has endeavoured to show through the emphasis on this novel that the fall of the family leads to the fall of a whole social order .

It has also attempted to emphasize on the fact that it is only when a family places much weight to the essential human values , it can hold together as a unit. A family bereft of

¹ Eudora Welty. On William Faulkner .U.S.A : University Press of Mississippi . 2003 , p09

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these values , as highlighted through the Composns in *The Sound and the Fury* - the fruit of Faulkner's marvellous imagination- will only lead to ruin and dissolution . Moreover , the Southern society as crystallized in Faulkner's cycle of fiction is one which moved forward very slowly was in fact more backward looking . It is a society which suffers from some inherent problems set in its pattern – social , racial and economic problems – as elaborated in the preceding chapters . By and large , there was a marked difference in the economy , culture and social attitudes of the Southern society .

By the same token , Faulkner rendered artfully and masterfully the various causes that contributed to the backwardness of the Southern society , starting with the presence of the peculiar institution of slavery as being an indispensable factor for the economy ; which also left an ugly spot in the social scene of the Sothern society , moving on to the defeat in the Civil War and its weighty impact not only on Southerners , but mainly on the psyche of the US South in general. Another essential reason for the lagging behind of the South was mainly due to the Southerners' intense obsession with the past and its glories .

Furthermore , it is plainly evident to state that Faulkner never tried to avoid the negative side of life ; even though it was dreadfully difficult for him to face his hometown's painful reality . Indeed , it was the darker side that has always and long held his attention. This mode of thinking is apparent and endorsed by Gunter Blocker , he asserts that “ the essence of Faulknerian narrative as a whole , lies in this double journey through Hell – namely , that we can overcome our fear not by avoiding it but by facing up to it .”¹ Therefore, it was the decadent side of life that always caught Faulkner's attention and he did paint the tragic course of many families that inhabited his fictive space.

In addition to this , relying on his fiction , Faulkner has emphasized a set of typical moral and universal values that should be an integral part of a family . In point of fact , it is the disregard shown to the essential moral and ethical mores that led to the decay of not a family or a way of life , but a complete social order . Love , concern , tolerance and compassion are amongst the salient values that should basically present within a family , the absence of such attributes , as shown in the fate of the Composn family only lead to their split up .

¹ Gunter Blocker . William Faulkner . Prentice Hall : Inc , Englewwod Cliff .1968 , p 125

However, it is worthy of note to state that despite the whole mess and curse that surround the South, one can really think of the South's chance to move forward by leaving the past behind and getting a chance for redemption and regeneration. As amongst the main reasons for the region's decay are the attempts to live according to the romanticized Southern ideals in the time and space in which they are becoming obsolete and useless. What is more, Faulkner provides an optimistic view for the survival of the traditional South in the modern world; this optimism is embodied in the selfless endurance and faith of people like Dilsey, Molly, Lena and Ratliff, characters that Faulkner qualify as benevolent primitives; who despite the tragic world that surround them find peace. In an interview, Faulkner's sense of hope and optimism is manifested, showing that he had absolute faith in the future of the South and the human race as well, he avowed: "But we aren't specifically concerned with history, though it is always around us. Mankind was in the past, and in the present and will be in the future."¹

Faulkner's fiction is a mirror of the South whose civilisation has been buried under the soil: a land that has absorbed trauma and run thick with blood, crying out to those who have trampled upon it for so long. The characters, both white and black, inherit a tragic narrative of their homeland, and the ghosts of past sins haunt their memory. Faulkner's South exists in the fluidity of time, where the past is always present and southerners always carry with them a burden of inheritance. Quentin Compson's reaction to being asked why he hates the South encompasses the burden of the southerner: "I don't hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; "I don't hate it," he said, "I don't hate it he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: I don't. I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it" (*Absalom Absalom!*) Hate it or love it, the landscape of the American South stands as a force to be reckoned with. The stories and voices of people of different times, gender, and races are woven into the fabric that provides the setting of Faulkner's distinctly Southern narrative.

The burden of Southern history is not that it is simply inherited (whether blindly or through suffering), but that it is living history which has stopped but which continues to live in present time: the Southern tale is forever suspension. It is plainly evident that there is no resolution to the tale, no reckoning, acceptance or apology or concession. To this end, it can be argued that the Southern tale is indeed locked, more than this, it is quite un-solid with

¹ William Faulkner on His Native Soil, Mississippi, Paris Review, 1956.

its own confining boundaries . Just like the Civil War offered no reconciliation , the Southern tale offer no resolution .

The French critic Jean Paul Sartre asserts that Faulkner sought to paint his region's reality through a thoughtful exploration of the past rather than the present . To explore this matter , Jean Paul Sartre suggests the image of a man seated in the back of a speeding car , facing the rear. The road itself is time-considered in its entirety ; the part stretching behind is the past and the road yet to be travelled is the future . For such a traveller , the future cannot yet be known and the present is blurred by the car's speed . Only the past can be seen clearly. According to Sartre , Faulkner's characters are such travellers. Motivated by blind mechanical fate , they cannot foresee their own actions , nor be fully conscious of them except belonging to the past .

And this was all to bring the reader closer to the inside of Faulkner's Mississippi home. Understanding the South and then more importantly , as if by a natural progression , understanding Faulkner's imagination in that South was to provide the reader with the key into what Faulkner had created in his novels . Thus , this was my ticket to becoming the witness . As I moved along this material I realized that the South was the key to not only what Faulkner created , but also to what created Faulkner . All in all , travelling through Faulkner's fiction after having understood the South , the defeat , walking into the battleground of the Southern mind and imagination at work , it became more obvious that the Southern matter is not yet over .

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix One

Glossary of Literary Terms

Foreshadowing : is a literary device in which the writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story without revealing the story or spoiling the suspense . Foreshadowing always appears at the beginning of the story as it is used to suggest an up coming to the story.

Genre : a term , French in origin that denotes types or classes of literature characterized by a specific form , content and style. Indeed , Genres are conceived to be more or less arbitrary modes of classification whose justification is their convenience in talking about literature . The major literary genres were : epic , tragedy , lyric , comedy , satire to which now added novel and short story . From the Renaissance and until well on into the 18th century , the genres were carefully distinguished and writers were expected to follow the rules prescribed for them .

Gothic : (Novel/Fiction) or in alternative term Gothic Romance refers to a style of writing which is characterized by elements of fear , horror , death and gloom . It was inaugurated by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* a Gothic story (1764) . America , especially the southern part of it , has been fertile in Gothic fiction in the extended sense from the novels of Charles Brockden and the terror tales of Edgar Allan Poe to William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* .

Psyche : a term Latin in origin , derived from the word psykhe , it hints at the soul , mind and spirit or invisible animating entity which occupies the physical body . In other words , another word for the place where one's thoughts come from is psyche .

Stream of consciousness : is a term coined by William James in Principles of Theory of Psychology (1890) to denote the flow of inner experiences. Now it has become an indispensable term in literary criticism , more specifically it refers to that technique which depicts happenings in the flow of thoughts in the minds of characters . Another phrase for stream of consciousness is “ interior monologues”.

Appendices

Style : in literature style is the characteristic manner of expression , how a particular writer says things . The analysis and assessment of style involves examination of a writer's choice of diction , figures of speech , the literary devices , the shape of his sentences and paragraphs to establish mood , images and meaning in the text .

Technique : is a typical and deliberate construction of language that the writer utilizes to convey meaning . A writer's use of a literary technique usually occurs with a single word or phrase , or a group of words or phrases , at one single point in a text .

Theme : is very often defined as a main idea or underlying meaning in a literary work which can be stated directly or indirectly . Themes fall into two major divisions : major and minor. The first is an idea that a writer repeats in his work by making it the most significant idea in a literary work ; whereas the minor theme appears briefly as an idea and has less importance in a literary work .

Tradition : this denotes the inherited past which is available for the writer to study and learn from . Thus the writer's native language , literary forms , codes , devices , conventions and various cultures from the past .It can also be defined as” a historical scheme made up of formal stylistic , and ideological attributes common to large numbers of works over a long time.”¹

Tragedy : is a branch of drama that treats in a serious and dignified style the sorrowful or encountered events . Though the term is frequently used to denote any sort of disaster , it more specifically refers to works of written art that echo to a high degree questions with regard to man .

¹ Peter Childs , Roger Fowler . The Routledge dictionary of Literary Terms. London . Taylor and Francis Group, 2006 , p240

Appendices

Appendix Two

The Major Literary Works at the Core of this Thesis

The Sound and the Fury

It would be impossible to say how long *The Sound and the Fury* had been germinating in Faulkner's mind when he began to write . The writing itself took three years , a long time for a novelist who has often composed rapidly. The novel is one of those rare efforts in which an artist breaks through to the core of his matter. When asked by a group of Mississippi students which of his novels he regarded best , he replied : *As I Lay Dying* was easier and more interesting , *The Sound and the Fury* still continues to move me.

The Sound and the Fury is William Faulkner fourth novel , published in 1929 . It draws its title from a soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* . It offers a dramatic representation of the decay of one of the once prominent Southern families which suffered heavily from a loss of status , wealth and morality . The novel falls into four main sections and the story is voiced by three Compson brothers , out of chronological order . The novel requires a thoughtful concentration to be interpreted in the sense that it tells more than it reveals . Indeed, it is the one novel in which Faulkner's vision and technique are almost in complete harmony .

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Absalom Absalom !

Because the material of *Absalom Absalom !* was so oppressively close to Faulkner , he had to be tactful by finding a suitable device by which to hold and project that device . It seems that the only possible tool was to create a fictive space which is modelled after Faulkner's real world. Furthermore , The main action in *Absalom Absalom !* takes place in Faulkner's mythical county of Yoknapatawpha .

in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner produced a novel which denies the fundamental moral and ethical principles that used to form the backbone of the Old South and upon which the latter was established . In this novel , Faulkner's thoughtful imagination gave birth to a genuine variety of characters , unforgettably striking in their attitudes and traits , their speech and posture . No other Faulkner character rules a book so completely as does Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom Absalom !*

Thomas Sutpen, stands for all the great and noble qualities found in the South and at the same time represents the failure and decay of the US South. Sutpen's major focus was to establish a dynasty of his own in the same manner as he would build anything else caused him and the South to overlook certain moral values and conducts , since the wealth of both Sutpen and the Old South was built upon the enslavement of the other .

Appendices

As I Lay Dying

As I Lay Dying is a story of misfortunes fabulously multiplied . A story of a journey , an account of adventures on the road , this may be the outward form of the novel , along the way , the journey proves exceedingly curious and the adventures disconcert . Unwilling adventures , the Bundrens can do nothing well , their journey much like their life seems to be wasteful .

The novel of *As I Lay Dying* is told in individual sections, the narration of the story shifts from one character to another , most sections are voiced by members of the Bundren family. The events of the novel go around fulfilling a mother's final wish to be buried in Jefferson . To adhere their mother's wish, the family travels the distance to Jefferson during a hot, wet spell in Mississippi, and throughout the journey, their mother's body proceeds to decay, when they discover that a bridge has washed out, the family must find a way to get Adie's (their mother) coffin over the river, and the ensuing scenes are both tragic and comic.

When these events become too horrific for Darl and he comes to understand that his mother needs to be buried properly, he tries to burn his mother's body and coffin in a barn, an act for which he is declared mentally insane. Darl was sent to an insane asylum because he does not want to reimburse the family for their barn, which was destroyed by the fire.

Appendices

Go Down Moses

The book is a collection of seven short stories, it was first published in 1942 as a novel under the inaccurate title *Go Down, Moses, and Other Stories*; the title was later on corrected for the second printing. The stories are set in Faulkner's fictive kingdom 'Yoknapatawpha County'. The book is challenging to read with multiple characters, differing points of view, narrative digressions, and no consistent linear sense of time, compromising some of the author's best literary productions.

The voices of Faulkner's South—black and white, comic and tragic—ring through the eye-catching tale of the McCaslin clan. This novel is constructed as a set of interdependent short stories which all follow the same family, the McCaslin family. The complete histories emerge gradually over the course of the book, with bits of information appearing in successive stories to clarify, complete, and sometimes controvert the information given in previous stories. But each story has its own plot, as well, independent of the other stories. Although the seven stories were originally published separately, *Go Down, Moses* is best read as a novel of interconnecting generations, races, and dreams.

«بين الالتفات إلى الماضي و المضي قدما : رباعية الماضي التراجيديا الصدمة و الغفران في الأعمال البارزة لويليام فولكنر صدى الجنوب الأمريكي»

المخلص :

مما لا مرأى فيه أنّ الجنوب منطقة متميّزة في جزء من أجزاء و . م . أ أهم وأكثر من رُفعتها وحُدودها الجُغرافيّة؛ مُتمثّلة في حُدود الخبرة والتقاليد والأعراف التي أكسبتها سحنةً فريدة، وهويّة مُتقرّدة. إنّها منطقة ثريّة وشعب غنيّ مُتشرّب بتاريخ عريق دمّرتَه الحروب والكوارث والفقر و أغرقه الفساد السّياسيّ والعنصريّة المُججفة. مُنذ الوطأة الأولى للوم. أ ركنَ الجنوب الأمريكيّ إلى ماضيه التّليد بشكل كبيرٍ ليُلوّزَ هويّته، وتُشكّل عرقه، مُستأنفًا ومُستمرًا إلى العصر الحاليّ مُستخدِمًا الرّخارف والصُّور والرّموز المُتداوَلة. البدء و الانطلاقة من الجنوب مرتبط ومركز هذه الدراسة التي نسعى من خلالها إلى تسليط الضوء على موضوع الماضي الذي استُحدثت و بُعثت من جديد مُلقبًا بظلاله على الواقع الحاضر راسما للمستقبل . إنّ الإصرارَ المُستمرَّ للنظر إلى الخلف والترّد الجادّ في المُضيّ قُدّمًا هُما ثنائيتان أخذت من إهتمام أدب فولكنر حيزًا هامًا، وشملت مساحة واسعة من مؤلفاته نلمسه ونستقرنه في جُلّ رواياته .

كلمات مفتاحيه : الماضي - التراجيديا - الأمل - الجنوب الأمريكي- ويليام فولكنر

« *Avancer puis se retourner vers le passé pour en saisir ses tragédies , traumatismes et rédemption dans les œuvres majeures de William Faulkner , le représentant du Sud* »

Résumé :

C'est une vérité généralement reconnue que le Sud des Etats-Unis est une région caractéristique en ce sens qu'elle a donné une identité unique à cette nation. Bien plus important que ses frontières géographiques, sont les frontières de l'expérience et de la tradition qui lui ont façonné une identité singulière dans la nation des Etats-Unis. En effet, c'est un espace qui a offert des richesses à sa population mais aussi une tumultueuse histoire , dévastée par l'esclavage, le racisme, la corruption, la pauvreté, la guerre civile (1861-1865). En partant du Sud , cette étude tourne autour du thème du passé toujours si tenace , jusqu'à éclipser le présent et rendant ainsi l'avenir complexe . Un besoin persistant de regarder en arrière et une sérieuse réticence à avancer sont les principales préoccupations de William Faulkner dépeintes brillamment dans sa fiction .

Mots clés : le Passé- l'Espoir – la Tragédie – le Sud d'Amérique- William Faulkner .

« *Moving Forward , Looking Backward : Past , Tragedy , Trauma and Redemption in the Major Works of William Faulkner , the Salient Representative of the Southern Reality.* »

Abstract:

It is a truth generally acknowledged that the South is more distinctively a region that any other portion of the United States is . Far more important than its geographical boundaries are the boundaries of experience and tradition which have given it a unique identity in the nation. Indeed , it is a region and people of rich , yet tumultuous history , devastated by slavery , violent racism , corruption , poverty and the Civil War (1861-1865) . Departing from the South , the centre of this examination is a Southern subject *par excellence* . The present study seeks to cast light on the ever-reappearing topic of the past overshadowing the present and determining the future . A persistent urge to look back and a serious reluctance to move forward are one of Faulkner's chief concerns and are omnipresent in his fiction .

Key words: Past – Tragedy - Hope – The American South – William Faulkner