

Human Relationships in the Selected Novels of William Faulkner

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Abstract

The paper examines the presence and form of the human spirit within selected characters in the works of William Faulkner. Faulkner, in his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, concluded that man is immortal because he has a soul, a spirit; capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance, and that the duty of the writer and the poet is to write about these things. Many previous readers, however, had viewed Faulkner's writings as dealing primarily with grotesque characters and immoral themes. Characters possessing the human spirit reveal the following characteristics of the life force: surprising energy, competitive joy, peak experiences and resistance to adversity, survival in the face of death, courageous activity in emergency situations, and living out a life-purpose. I have also incorporated the work of John Teske, suggesting a social dimension of the human spirit extending through several generations. A biographical sketch of Faulkner is provided, including literary influences on Faulkner and his use of experimental structure. Characters analyzed are selected arbitrarily to mirror and reflect humanity as a whole in that they contain both human strengths and flaws in varying amounts. This dissertation also discusses the human spirit in terms of its appearance within the four social classes described in Faulkner's work. The human spirit's role in relation to nature, war, machines, and life after death is also studied. Thus study assesses Faulkner's great theme, the human heart in conflict with itself, his valuation of love over rationalism, man's struggle with good and evil and his need to overcome evil by acknowledgement, struggle, discipline, and effort. Conclusions generated by this study were: (1) from his earliest publications, Faulkner has written about a positive human spirit. This was not a new idea emanating from the Nobel Prize speech. (2) For Faulkner, the presence of the human spirit is a human trait, found to a greater or lesser degree in all individuals. (3) Social class is unrelated to the presence of the human spirit in Faulkner. (4) The life force can be present in good or evil men. The other more developed qualities of the human spirit -- patience, endurance, love, concern with a social legacy -- occur only in men making moral choices; and (5) In Faulkner, love must take priority over rationalism in people conveying a strong human spirit.

Key words: Human Spirit, Human Relationships, William Faulkner.

INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner was one of the most outstanding American novelists. He is sometimes called "the American Shakespeare", (Hamblin and Peek, a William Faulkner Encyclopedia). Several awards and distinctions were conferred upon him, the most prestigious being the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954 and the National Book Award in 1950. His two novels *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *The Reivers* (1947) won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction. He has been the third American writer to be honored with the highest prize in literature. Faulkner has taken a place beside Hawthorne, Melville and Henry James as one of the rare artists in fiction. Throughout much of Europe especially in France, he has been named among the first of novelists, with Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Proust and Sartre.

As a writer Faulkner's contribution is remarkable and unparalleled. In his writings one finds a rare amalgamation of modernistic techniques and traditional values. He deals with issues as old as the life on this earth in a technique that is as modern as the invention of psychoanalytical theory. Faulkner drew extensively upon his family, his extended family and background in a very traditional way for material upon which he employed this technique. His fecundity of imagination, the range of compassion and the reach of his courage as an artist have impressed and awed his admirers and critics alike. His power of invention is great and he has contributed to the theory of the novel as an art form.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To know about William Faulkner's contribution in novel.
2. To find out human relationships in the selected novels of William Faulkner.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was documentary analysis type. Data and information were collected from secondary sources. Data and information were collected from books, journals, research report and Internet etc.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

Born	:	On September 25, 1897 at New Albany, Mississippi, in the United States of America
Nationality	:	American
Language	:	English
Alma mater	:	University of Mississippi (no degree)
Notable works	:	1) <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> , 2) <i>As I Lay Dying</i> , 3) <i>Light in August</i> 4) <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> , 5) "A Rose for Emily"
Notable awards	:	1) Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949 2) Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1955 and 1963 3) National Book Award in 1951 and 1955
Spouse	:	Estelle Oldham (1929–1962; his death)
Died	:	July 6, 1962 (aged 64) at Byhalia, Mississippi, in the United States of America

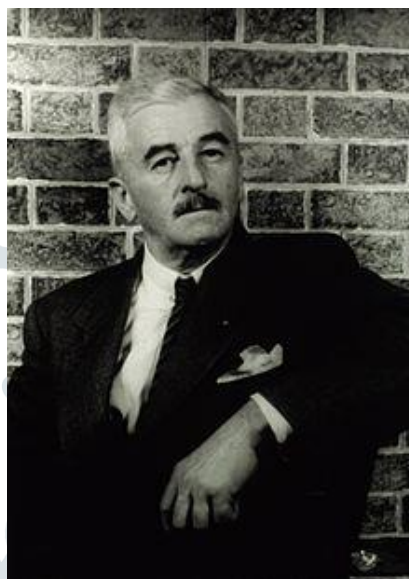


Figure 1: William Faulkner in 1954

Faulkner began his career as a poet. Fourteen of his derivative poems appeared in the weekly student newspaper, *The Mississippi*, from October of 1919 to May 1921. His first published volume was a collection of nineteen lyrics: *The Marble Faun* (1924). His next collection was published in 1933. It was titled *A Green Bough*. But none of these caught attention or appreciation. Faulkner's first novel, *Soldier's Pay* was published in 1926 and the second novel *Mosquitoes* was published in 1927. A casual piece of advice by Sherwood Anderson in New Orleans eventually started his major literary achievement. Faulkner discovered 'himself as a writer in *Sartoris* (1929). The novel is an uncritical commentary of the *Sartoris* family legend, fetched down to the new generation, centered in the young boy named *Sartoris*. The novel was the foundation for the construction of the Yoknapatwpha saga.

The end of Faulkner's apprentice period, and the beginning of the most important eight year phase in his entire literary career was marked by the writing and publishing of *The Sound and The Fury* in 1929, which is considered to be one of the hundred best books of all time. It was followed by his most controversial work *Sanctuary*. His previous novels had brought him critical praise but with *Sanctuary* he got popular success. Although it shocked its readers yet it made money for Faulkner.

In 1930, he published *As I Lay Dying* which he wrote in six weeks, without changing a word. Experimenting with the technique more boldly, he created an extreme "tour de force" (Garry Lee Stonum, *Faulkner's Career: An Internal History*. 105) in which the story is obliquely unfolded through sixty separate soliloquies, distributed among eight characters in the action. The novel fetched attention of many critics like Cleanth Brooks, Olga Vickery, and Doreen Fowler etc. The relationship between Negroes and whites in the South became the subject matter of his next novel, *Light in August* (1932) which revolves around certain social, psychological and religious attitudes towards the Negro blood, either pure or defiled.

His eighth novel, *Pylon* (1935) is considered one of his worst. Another Faulknerian literary experiment was seen in *The Unvanquished* (1938) which is one of the finest novels by the writer. *The Wild Palms* (1939) stands apart from the rest of his books. It is a product of curious technical experiment on Faulkner's part. It can be best described as a double novel with two plots, consisting of two stories- the title story and one called *Old Man*. Faulkner's next novel, *The Hamlet* was published in 1940 without any indication that it would eventually constitute the first volume in a trilogy devoted to the grotesque and tragicomic affairs of that Snopes family which had been first mentioned in *Sartoris*. The other two novels of the trilogy are *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959).

Go down Moses (1942) explores the relationship between Negro and white in Yoknapatwpha County. In this, three lines of descent (male, female and Negro) are dramatically traced from the old Abraham of the family, the pioneering Carothers McCaslin. *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), a novel with overt social and political intentions, may be considered as a sequel to *Go down Moses* as the central character; Lucas Beauchamp plays an important role in both the narratives. Faulkner's last novel was *The Reivers* (1962) which brought the Yoknapatwpha saga to a close. Although Faulkner has no formal knowledge of psychoanalytic theory yet his understanding of the depth of human heart, mind and soul is immense and it is clearly evident in his novels. In his conversation

with Malcolm Cowley, Faulkner said: I listen to voices and when I put down what the voices say, it is right. Sometimes I don't like what they say, but I do not change it (Fowler, Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed, 5).

In Faulkner's fiction one sees among other things, the contrast between the old and the new, and the pressure created upon various individuals by crumbling of the past and the shift from the past to the present. "Reading Faulkner one feels involved in a long history of torment, suffering and anguish but also of endurance, dedication and love" (O'Connor, William Faulkner, 39). In his novels one finds how the institutionalization of rigid social and religious codes have abolished natural human relations and created antagonistic responses among men. He presents picture of modern man who is stripped of all enduring values and is lost. Man has lost his primitive sense of belongingness to a creative natural order, because he views existence as a chaos rather than custom. The picture of modern Adam that emerges from some of Faulkner's major novels is part of the epic image of man formed by characters like Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in Joyce's Ulysses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sheer bulk of his work is impressive. His publications include approximately fifty poems, ninety short stories, seventeen novels and a three act drama. He is known for an abundance of narrative incidents. In his novels Faulkner created the mythical kingdom of Yoknapatwpha County which is a battleground of Sartoris and Snopes, the age old and never ending battle of good and evil.

The ever widening gap between people who live by values and die for honor and people who are ready to do anything for trivial gains is clearly visible in Faulkner's fiction. His mythical kingdom was not an oversimplified sketch of imagination or a mere mention of the name or a simple description; rather he created it with all its minutest details. In his map of the place he showed it as having a population of about 15,611 and area 2400 square miles. He called himself the "sole owner and proprietor" (Cowley, Introduction to the Portable Faulkner, 5) of this mythical kingdom. His mythical creation is both a mythical and actual region where his family had lived since time before the Civil War. Faulkner, long familiar with the minutest details of the South, saw it as a strange land. "Faulkner's entire universe is the memory of a race, of a country whose secret disease is the complete lack of roots and traditions. Faulkner's work is a vast autobiography, not of one isolated individual but of a whole human group" (Beck, William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, 76). Written in the late twenties, his novels have been examined in the light of subsequent history. They are an integral part of the post war period.

Faulkner is considered the most deeply Southerner of Southern writers. Just as to think of Hardy is to think of Wessex and to talk of Robert Frost is to talk of New England, similarly to talk of Faulkner is to talk of the South of America with its grim realities and terrifying truths. At the heart of Faulkner's work, the setting and scene of most of his novels, is his legendary Yoknapatwpha County. It is supposed to be in the north western Mississippi, with its county seat called Jefferson, lying about seventy five miles south east of Memphis and forty miles from Oxford. His mythical kingdom did not evolve gradually in his imagination and his fiction; he discovered it fully peopled with a full array of family ghosts. The majority of Faulkner's characters are members of the pioneering families. In the Yoknapatwpha fiction same characters appear and reappear. Sometimes it is difficult to read and understand one novel without reading the other. All the books in the Yoknapatwpha fiction are a part of the same living pattern. They are like the blocks of the marble from the same quarry. It goes to the credit of the Nobel Laureate that very affectionately and without passing judgment he acquaints his readers with Sartoris, Snopes, McCasins and Compsons. One finds in Faulkner innumerable scenes worth remembering like Lena Grove serenely licking the sardine oil from her fingers; Ike Snopes ambling after his beloved cow through the long afternoon; Benjy howling for his sister Caddy; Dari caressing his horse and Thomas Sutpen executing his design; Dilsey trying to comfort Quentin- the list seems endless because even his minor characters merely appearing in a scene or two clamour for the reader's attention. He told an interviewer for the Paris Review:

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. It opened up a gold mine of other people, so I created a cosmos of my own (Cowley, Writers at Work, 141).

Faulkner's preoccupation with the South in the great majority of his novels seems more like a matter of compulsion rather than a choice. As a Southerner, he was intensely aware of the past of his region and his family. "The South was not merely an obvious subject for his fiction but fiercely and inescapably, the inevitable subject" (Millgate, Faulkner, 5).

His ability lies in an inventive language which articulates his imagination as it creates characters in action. In a period when the very word Negro has been replaced by the word 'black' because Negro is a white invention to stereotype darkly pigmented people so that they could be conveniently used as a cheap labor source, his views cannot be accepted as the idiosyncratic imaginations of an ineffectual writer.

Faulkner remains one of the finest story tellers along with Conrad, Kafka, Lawrence and Hemingway. His four books- The Sound and The Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! are generally considered the most powerful and innovative of twentieth century novels, while several others- Sanctuary, The Hamlet, Go down Moses- are of nearly equal status.

Faulkner's account of mythical country is an unparalleled account of a whole community and its life style. His detailed characterization and speech patterns of his characters are so accurate that he has been labeled a regional writer by some critics. But the fact remains that he has his flight from regional to universal. On a number of occasions he reiterated his belief in the universality of human heart, feelings and emotions. His writings are not merely relevant in the present century but their relevance has resulted from changing times and conditions. His every text in a way is addressed to and relevant to the succeeding generations of readers. His novels have been translated into more than twenty five languages. "There has been growing international interest in Faulkner, quite independent of American or 'Southern concerns' (Hamblin and Peek, A William Faulkner Encyclopedia, x). Far from idealizing the old South, Faulkner sees in it an instance of the paralyzing influence that a rigid caste system and a closed society can exert on the individual. Born in such a society, men are automatically labeled and cross filled in terms of color, class

and clan. The individual, thus, is born into an imposing system of myths and rituals, all of which exert their coercive pressure on him. Probably that is why Faulkner places human relationship on a very high pedestal. Faulkner's use of family as a major institution of 19th century Southern society is conspicuous in all his novels. "Faulkner is a conservative writer who sees the family as the basic unit of community" (Brooks, *Primitivism*, 23). The importance of love in a family is well acknowledged by Faulkner in the most complimentary and most significant dedication of *Go down Moses*:

To Faulkner the greatest love is not based upon sensation but upon spiritual affinity between man and nature, between man and his fellow beings and among members of a family. "Blood relationship is central in Faulkner's novels" (Warren, *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays* AA).

Faulkner's novels have warmth of family affection; a brother's love for brother and a sister's love for brother have been beautifully depicted in his novels. In fact, this love among siblings is so perfect and warm that it tries to shut the rest of the world. On the other hand, the father-son relationship depicts the theme of rigidity as a personal and social evil. He asserts the need to rebel against rigidity in order to gain freedom. "Faulkner created the myth of a father and child to establish the theme of rigidity in human terms" (Tuck, *A Handbook of Faulkner*,). The father represents the rigid social system and the son's rebel against the prevailing social order. Sons have a quest for a new social order. Charles Bon, Thomas Sutpen's deserted son in *Absalom, Absalom!* Makes it clear repeatedly that he will be satisfied with the least sign of recognition, the barest acknowledgement of human identity. But Sutpen's design does not allow that.

"You see, (he explains to General Compson) I had a design in my mind. Whether it was for good or bad design is beside the point; the question is, Where did I make mistake in it, what did I do or misdo in it, whom or what is injured by it to the extent which this would indicate" (*Absalom, Absalom*, 263).

His refusal to acknowledge Bon is the worst act of humanity yet he cannot see his fault. Sutpen's mistake is inherent in his design, in the monstrosity of its attempt to make human flesh and blood conform to the rigid contours of an abstract idea. Sutpen's refusal to acknowledge Charles as his son is due entirely to the same taint of Negro blood as had caused him to repudiate Charles's mother. Unacknowledged son of Sutpen, Bon is at the same time, through the special and stigmatizing means of his coming into being, the anonymous son of all those who like Sutpen, have contributed to their share towards the creation of a collectively anonymous human assemblage. "Sutpen's failure as a man lies in his refusal to regard even his family as other than his own design" (Millgate, *William Faulkner*, 58).

The deserted son is lost by his father's refusal. He is in a state of flux. He seems to exist beyond good and evil. He is at once the sophisticated gentleman, heir to and the representative of the best that the mythic South has produced, and at the same time the "nigger," a half-breed, homeless, despised and perpetually in search of roots and origins that must be perpetually denied to him. Quentin, too, rebels against his father, however passive his rebellion might appear in *The Sound and the Fury* "a novel about injurious family relationships" (Thompsons, 41). His passionate attempt to persuade his father that he has committed incest with Caddy is hopelessly shattered as it comes against the chilling imperturbability of Mr. Compson's worldly wisdom. Mr. Compson refuses to take seriously Quentin's threat of suicide. Quentin is crushed by Caddy's fall but Mr. Compson fails to see his son's desperate yearning. Quentin wants to believe in something that is positive and life giving. He says: "Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore, contrary to nature".

Benjy and Jason too revolt against their father but in a different way from their brother Quentin. Benjy's protest is shown in the howling and moaning that he does at every step. He is unaware about his own existence but he can sense things. He can feel the lack of fatherly love and concern. Jason rebels in an entirely different way from his brothers. For him, denying people their rightful living is his way of deriving pleasure. A man of marred psychology Jason has no love or family in his life. His views about life, love and family are cynical. The opening lines of Jason's section are typical of him. His remarks about his fourteen year old niece are mean, "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I say you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you" (223). He has become a sadist owing to the absence of proper guidance from his father and the atmosphere at home. He enjoys burning two free passes to a show in order to torment his young Negro servant. He is left with only one relationship that is his love for money. He can go to any extent to amass money. He can stoop to any level for money:

Money is Jason's substitute for potency; appropriately; then, he selects for a girlfriend a prostitute, choosing a relationship that is clearly based on his ability to pay rather than on any other ability (Fowler, *The Return of the Repressed*). Bayard has to find a way to avenge his father's murder in *Sartoris*. His path is indeed glorified.

Anse in *As I Lay Dying* is the meanest father Faulkner has created. He cannot see anything beyond his self interest. Everyone and everything is secondary for him. He always manages to get what he wants by using others. He has no love for his children. Jewel, Cash, Darl, Vardaman and Dewey Dell always feel the lack of fatherly love. They know their father too well who always befools people around him with his meekness. He does not mind making his son Jewel lose his favorite horse. His son Cash breaks his leg twice during their journey to Jefferson. He does not hesitate to rob his daughter's petty abortion money by telling her that he has been feeding her for the last fifteen years. Dewey Dell says:

"Don't you touch it! If you take it, you are a thief.
My own daughter accuses me of being a thief. My own daughter.
I have fed you and sheltered you (255)."

Anse's children are shocked at his mean behavior. On the night of the burial of Addie, he puts perfume. Cash observes, "...with his hair combed wet and smelling sweet with perfume..." (259).

It is in motherhood that Faulkner captures the quality of life that characterizes the whole person - symbolic of the human capacity for caring, for protecting, for treasuring, for loving life. But under the psychic and social pressures and through one's own inadequacies this relationship has also been marred.

The devastating consequences suffered by the offspring of a mother incapable of or even antipathetic to performing her function can be seen in *The Sound and The Fury*. Mrs. Caroline Compson fails to give a feeling of security and love to her children. She is always complaining and whining. She says to Jason, "I know I'm just a trouble and a burden to you." She says crying on the pillow (71STF, 180). Her failure to give her children love is the primary cause of the family's disintegration. She is ashamed of her idiot son Benjy. She is afraid to be seen with him. She changes his name from Maury to Benjy as it is his uncle's name. She crosses all levels of meanness when the Negro servant Dilsey celebrates Benjy's birthday which everyone else in the family has forgotten. Dilsey who has brought a cake for Benjy from her meagre savings is scolded by Mrs. Compson. She rebukes her by saying, "Do you want to poison him with that cheap store cake" (71SYF, 200). She fails to give her adolescent daughter, Caddy any love or solace which she needs desperately. Quentin remembers at one moment in his soliloquy that Caddy had once said, after her fall from grace, "If I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother, Mother."

Many of Faulkner's male characters go through their formative years in male dominated households without the maternal ministrations they need. It is generally offered by a female relative, a black matriarch or a sister.

Addie in *As I Lay Dying* is a lady of strong conviction and opinions. She seems insane many times in her overindulgence for her illegitimate son and hatred for her other children. In fact she hates everyone including her own father whom she blames for her miseries, "I would hate my father for having ever planted me" (170).

She finds fulfillment through her illegitimate son, Jewel who also reciprocates her fierce intensity. She shares with him a strange love hate relationship. She takes extra care of Jewel since childhood. Dari observes, "She would fix him special things to eat and hide them for him" (130). Jewel's love for his mother is expressed in many ways. As he cannot express his fierce love directly, so he expresses it through his love for his horse. Dari who hates Jewel for being mother's favorite keeps on taunting him, "Jewel's mother is a horse" (95). For Jewel the coffin of his mother is his mother. Like a true son he saves her malodorous coffin from fire and water. For him love for his mother finds expression in terms of standing on a high hill and throwing rocks down the hill at anyone who would intrude upon the privacy of his love for his mother.

For her other children like Dari, Vardaman and her only daughter, Dewey Dell, she has no love. She considers them of her husband alone: I gave Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel. Then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of. And now he has three children that are his not mine (AILD, 176). Since the children are not her they are denied place in her affection. "Addie is an inverted Demeter." Addie and Dewey Dell fit into the Demeter/ Persephone image. In Dewey Dell's perception Addie must die so that she can achieve what she wants to achieve. Dari is rejected by his mother at the time of his birth. Throughout his life he yearns to be loved and recognized by his mother. He craves to be accepted as a son but Addie's contempt for her husband is transferred to her son, Dari. Dari seems to have become Anse's child" (Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*). So bewildered is Dari by his mother's rejection in the place of her affection that he remains in a state of flux. He is lost in the world.

His behavior is far from a normal boy's behavior. It is difficult to comprehend his actions. During their journey to Jefferson he sets fire to the bag containing Addie's corpse. "He is attempting figuratively to take possession of Addie and to renounce her" (Fowler, *The Return of the Repressed*, 159). There are many instances in the novel that indicate his insane behavior but he is also a fine thinker who broods over various timeless issues like identity, love and truth. Cleanth Brooks compares him with Falstaff. Dari, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, recognizes the hollowness of honor. He understands all too well the motives that prompted Addie to demand to be buried among her own people, and when the cost of the journey becomes staggering, he denies the claims of the dead over the living (*First Encounters*, 20).

Dari is jealous of his brother Jewel as their mother loved him the most. Since he is hurt by his mother's rejection he in return hurts her favorite son Jewel. Somehow he has come to know that Anse is not Jewel's father. One idea to which Faulkner may be said to adhere consistently is that without love, no one can ever be a human being. Lawrence Edward Bowling very aptly comments, "In Faulkner's writing the lovers are never losers, and the non lovers are always losers- even when they win" (Welshmer Wagner, *Four Decades of Criticism*, 117).

It is love that makes Benjy moan the loss of his sister Caddy. It is Quentin's obsession for his sister Caddy that makes him claim that he has committed incest with her. This way he wants to protect her from the loud, mad world outside. He hopes that through this ultimate sin he might have Caddy to himself: "Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it, finished if things just finished themselves nobody else there but her and me. If we could just have something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us (77)."

So disillusioned is Quentin by Caddy's fall and her loveless marriage that he commits suicide. He realizes that life is meaningless without Caddy around her. He is startled to see Caddy's promiscuity. He is shocked to learn about Caddy's pregnancy.

Unable to face reality, he takes refuge in fantasy. He is scared to face reality. He cannot come to terms with his sister's sexual awareness or her desire for a male partner. Cleanth Brooks rightly comments:

Quentin has long been obsessed by the past. He has for example, refused to accept the fact that his relation to Caddy is bound to change as she becomes a young woman and seeks a male and life of her own (*First Encounters*, 5\)

Jason too loves his sister and his reason of loving his sister is as strange as that of his other brothers. Caddy has been a means to earn job. But she failed him. So he thinks of her all the time as a cause of his misfortune and marred future. In order to cope with that loss he steals money that Caddy sends for her daughter. His hatred for the world is reflected in the tortures and troubles he hurls at his young niece Quentin. He is a victim of his own whimsical attitude towards life in which money is centre of existence. Since Caddy has been a reason of job loss so he considers her a bitch. "Once a bitch always a bitch" (223), is his favorite line to define his sister and niece. Jason understands only one language and that is the language of money. Nothing is dear to him except the accumulation of wealth. Jason has tried to reduce every human relationship to its cash value. Small wonder that Jason declares that he has every respect for a good honest whore (First Encounters, 76).

Faulkner has presented very vividly the love of siblings in *The Sound and the Fury*. Henry's idealization of Charles Bon is so overpowering that he is ready to accept Bon as his brother. He does not even bother about his father. He is ready to renounce his patrimony in favour of Bon. Judith too shares same adoration and concern for her brothers in *Absalom, Absalom!* John, too, embraces death for his brother Bayard in *Sartoris*.

Faulkner presented love between married people in varied shades. At places there is no love between married people. Sometimes there is lack of concern and complete apathy between the couple. It is because of the strange reasons that they are married. Sometimes marriage is result of some unavoidable circumstances. But more often than not it is hardly the result of love or attraction. Eula Varner, the divinely beautiful girl is hushed into marriage with an impotent imposter to cover her pregnancy in *The Snopes Trilogy*. There is probably the case of worst mismatched marriage in Faulkner. An astoundingly beautiful and desirable girl Eula Varner is an incarnation of nature in its most beautiful form. She is compared to Earth Goddess and is worshipped wherever she goes. Everyone is left awed by her divine beauty and overpowering sexuality. There is hardly anyone who is not bewitched by her charm.

Ratcliff calls his room the Eula Varner room, but Charles Mallison says it is more like a shrine. The divinely beautiful Eula is sold to Flem who has only one craving in life and that is to get rich by hook or crook. Flem readily accepts her as his wife due the monetary benefits. He has no concern for her or anyone else in his life, "for benevolence is a completely foreign concept" (Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, 86). He can never appreciate her beauty or bed his wife whom every boy in Frenchman's Bend has dreamed of. "He is cold, mean, tough, and shrewd, without sentiment or visible emotion" (Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 63). He does not mind her being pregnant before marriage or having an affair after marriage. He is not interested in her. For him she is a means to get rich. Later he does not hesitate to exploit her affair to extract more from Eula. Even her suicide is seen as an opportunity to draw something more from her family. Because of Flem's impotence and the lovelessness of their relationship, their relationship is sterile, a symbolic Land of the Dead.

Addie's contempt for her husband Anse is too great. So overwhelming is her hatred for Anse that even his children are worth hating. Dewey Dell, Vardman and Dari who are only Anse's children have no place in her scheme of things. Addie married Anse to get rid of the boredom of her life. But he fails to understand her and respond to her fiercely intense personality. Frustrated Addie exacts a promise from Anse, to be buried in Jefferson. This in reality is her revenge from her husband who has been incapable of responding to her real being, her reality during her life. So she decides to punish him after death. Anse too promises her to fulfill her last wish to be buried among her own people in Jefferson. In fact it is not out of his love for Addie or respect for her emotions. It is due to his hidden motive to get himself new teeth and wife that he accepts her last wish. Among all the characters of the novel related to Addie directly or indirectly, he is least affected by her death. Addie's death is a healthy liberation for him. He is one dimensional caricature of selfishness, ineptitude and self pity. Looking at the corpse of his wife, a short time after her death, he says, "God's will be done. Now I can get them new teeth" (Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 47). His love for his departed wife is shown in the way he dresses at the night of Addie's burial and puts perfume "...with his hair combed wet and slick and smelling of perfume" (259). Through the effort and sacrifice of his children he buries his first wife and at the time of burial he is ready with another. He is a soulless person and in a way he outshines Addie's desire to revenge and punish him by providing him a new wife. "Addie's revenge is subverted by Anse's own selfish motives for the journey he wanted to take anyway. Anse's insanity is visible in his incompleteness" (Fowler and Abadie, *Faulkner and Humour*, A3).

The commanding personality of Thomas Sutpen blots out any consideration of love in *Absalom, Absalom*. This novel is considered, "Faulkner's most impressive achievement, a work of technical virtuosity and moral anguish on a scale not seen in American literature since Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*" (Millgate, *Faulkner*, 52). Sutpen rejects his first wife because she has a taint of Negro blood in her. He marries for the second time as he wants a male heir to continue his name. Now he needs respectability the most so he selects wife from a respectable family. Ellen Coldfield suits him best for this purpose. Undoubtedly, Sutpen has no interest in her. Once she begets him a male heir, she becomes a non entity for him. She is as good as a dead woman in the Sutpen house. Unfortunately, Ellen becomes a pale reflection of her dominating husband. She is nothing more than a soulless woman who whines away her life like a non entity.

In Faulkner's fiction, beneath its worried surface of attitude and ideas, there is also a remarkable steadiness of feeling towards the Negro. His opinions change, his early racial complacency evaporates, and his sympathy visibly enlarges. The boy Isaac in *Go Down Moses* unconsciously and then with considered asset claims as his spiritual parent the old Negro, Sam Fathers. The real strength of *Go down Moses* lies not only in the stories of the hunt, important and impressive though these are, but in the powerful treatment of tragic relationship between white man and Negro at various periods of South's history. What Ike learns from his experience with the old Ben is something that is universal; it has to do with a perennial problem and with a problem more not less these days of man's quest for nature. But when man loses his awe of Nature through a purely efficient utilization of it, or when he ceases to love it in terms of some sort of code, he not only risks destroying nature but risks bestializing his own Nature. "Faulkner has pursued the enactment and consequences of man's misdeeds in a principled and disciplined manner as they are revealed in the McCaslin family" (Millgate, *William Faulkner*, 76).

A notable change was also noted in the depiction of the blacks. They may still be the obverse reflection of the whites they live among but they are at least recognized entities who cannot be easily known. Their reality must be grasped with effort. They are seen as human beings though still anchored within the limitations of the culture of their time. There is, however, recognition of their pain and anguish as victims. There is growing awareness of their hardships and traumas they have endured due to racism. If *Go Down Moses* is a serious scrutiny of the shame and pathos of white and black relationship, *Intruder in the Dust* is an exciting account of the relationship between Young Charles Mallison and Lucas Beauchamp- a white boy and Negro. The boy learns, though with great difficulty, to accept the Negro as a human being. The emphasis as revealed in *Lucas* is upon the autonomy of the blacks and the integrity of their personhood and upon the recognition and rejection by the blacks of the demeaning aspects of their status in society.

Joe Christmas, the doomed man in *Light in August* is engaged in a desperate, violent and life long search for a place in society and as a sense of his own identity. He is perpetually made aware of society's inflexible requirement that a man can either be a white or Negro and act accordingly. Even at the age of five in the orphanage he is made to feel that he is different from others but he is never able to gauge that difference. After he is rejected by the white world he lives in Detroit and leads a primitive black life. He lives as a man and wife with a woman who resembles an ebony carving. In his own way he tries to get rid of all the elements of whiteness from him but he fails again. He has not gained a place in the white world but he has been unfit for the black world also. Gavin Stevens sums up his tragedy:

It was not alone all those thirty years (of his personal existence)...but all those successions of thirty years before that which had put that stain either on his white blood or his black blood, whichever you will, and which killed him., his blood would not be quiet... it would for not be either one or the other (424).

He can never be accepted as a human being. Christmas is the tragic helpless victim of naturalistic fiction, destroyed by forces beyond his control. He is called "a specter or Phantom who has no place in society" (Jenkins, Faulkner and the Negro, 62).

His conflict is an analogue to the bleak, despairing, destructive racial battle that rends apart Southern society at large. Self hatred, guilt, obsession with racial purity in the face of its perennial threat, debasement of relationship between the individuals and inability to utilize life's potential are its internalized features. Faulkner demonstrates how the loss of the sanctity of life leads to a sense of corruption of life at its source.

Many critics are of the opinion that Joe is a villain who murders Joanna as in the very beginning of the novel he is being searched for the murder of Joanna, a recluse of New England abolitionist ancestry. Critics like Malcolm Cowley, one of Faulkner's best readers, link Joe Christmas with Popeye, the grotesque and the filthy villain of *Sanctuary* as "willing agents, dehumanized, deliberate extenders of destruction" (Cowley, *The Portable Faulkner*, 15). But Joe is a victim of society's rigidity that pushes him to the corner. "None of Faulkner's characters has been so grotesquely misunderstood as Joe Christmas" (Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, 49). Joe becomes what he ought to have become, not by any biological inheritance, but by the way in which society regards him, and the way in which he is constrained to regard himself. The Jefferson society has its classifications in terms of race and color. Every individual is labeled in and treated in these terms.

Surprisingly, these categories which are created by man become creators of man in their social identification. Unfortunately what starts as a category becomes a myth. The word Negro is certainly a myth in Jefferson society. That is why people like Joe who cannot fit in any category are either sacrificed or driven out of society whose cherished beliefs they threaten. Joe Christmas is more than a criminal; at least in his last moments, as he lies on the floor unconscious, unmoving, accepting death, he becomes an emblem of terrible and yet hopeful sacrifice (David L. Minter, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Light in August*,!). His triumph lies in the fact that in spite of everything that is done to him and that he does to the world, he remains in part dedicated to life.

One finds in Faulkner a progression from Southern stereotype to personal vision, interrupted by retreats to inherited phobias and to an ideology that is morally inadequate to the vision. Faulkner has tried to do justice to individuals of every class and individuals of every type in his works. Whether they are Negroes or whites, Southerner or Northerner, old settlers or new exploiters every character is expressing the outrage and fury before the terrible violence and injustice that foil the man's perfect living state. It was through his peculiar style and his elaborate methods of deliberately withholding the meaning that Faulkner found in art an adequate mistress to his terrible, complex and inexhaustible vision of outraged and baffled man- man who knows that his efforts to find perfect life must fail and his efforts to understand both his world and his failure must forever remain imperfect.

Faulkner conceived of love in terms of pity and compassion, sacrifice and faith, patience and endurance. Seldom in Faulkner's works has one found a mature recognition of fulfilled love between man and woman. The writer does not identify love with romantic courtship and illicit sexual activity. The fate of any man or woman who ignores love to pursue selfish ends is doomed. Harry stumbles at the operation that causes Charlotte's death in *The Wild Palms*. Everything about their romantic relationship is anti nature. They break the rules of Nature and are ultimately destroyed by Nature. For Sally R Page:

When Charlotte attempts to use sexuality as a means of escaping the reality of life's limitations rather than as a means of reproducing life, she aligns herself with the forces which destroy her (Faulkner's *Women*, 134).

Her desire not to have additional children is the outward sign of something lacking in her mental make-up. She seems to be lacking in the capacity of life. However, Harry allows life to live through it. With their passion for each other along with their follies they are a perfectly plausible pair, and their love story is one of the most poignant and bitter in modern literature. Eula's endless lovers lust over her in *The Snopes Trilogy*. But no one can impress her enough to be with her or to love her. She is completely unaffected

by the luscious glances or comments of the people around. One of her first lovers, Labove is bewildered by her appearance and appeal. He wants to possess her once. Like a mad man he lusts for her. His abortive attempt to molest her destroys him as for Eula it is not even worth mentioning. He runs away from the school. He is shocked and appalled by Eula's apathy. Gavin Stevens is Eula's another admirer. He loves her truly and is ready to do anything for her. His devotion is the devotion of devout. Like Labove, he is also shocked in his failure to have Eula. But his failure does not stop him from loving her or trying to protect her. In a way he is the only lover of Eula who actually loves her. He tries to save her from the onslaughts of Snopism but fails. His love is victorious in the sense that he is able to save Eula's daughter from Snopism. Like a true lover he gets nothing but defeat as all his endeavors fail to save Eula from committing suicide yet he is victorious in the sense that lovers are never losers.

Light in August presents strange amalgamation of two pairs of lovers and the entirely different outcomes of their love. One pair of lovers brings life and the other inflicts heart rending death on each other. Joe's desperate and violent search for peace ends in his tragic death whereas Lena's entry in Jefferson and in life of Byron brings life literally and metaphorically. David L. Minter rightly observes:

Whereas Lena moves slowly, purposefully across the face of her world, Joe Christmas circles furiously, ever hesitating and alone, forever grey and indefinite as a shadow. Whereas Lena's linear odyssey brings forth life, Joe's circular flight ends in death (Twentieth Century Interpretation of Light in August, 7).

To a certain extent Byron Bunch in Light in August is also an idealistic type of lover. He is ready to leave and sacrifice everything for Lena Grove who represents all those light and life bringing virtues of womanhood that Faulkner was fascinated with. Faulkner's admiration for Lena is worth observing: The story began with Lena Grove, the idea of the young girl with nothing, pregnant, determined to find her sweetheart. It was- "that was out of my admiration for women, for the courage and endurance of women"... (Faulkner in the University, 74).

She is simple and lives for the present moment only. Her life is guided by the moment she is in. She is allied with everything that is permanent and enduring. She is associated with everything that is simple and natural. She is able to comprehend the whole of her world, "a single glance all embracing, swift, innocent and profound" (LIA, 5). She sweeps Byron of his feet. He says, "With a kind of musing astonishment, I never ever had any need to keep it away from her, to lay it smooth. It was like she knew beforehand what I would say, that I was going to lie to her... But that part of her that knew the truth that I could not have fooled anyway" (LA, 226-27).

He simply wants to be her guide and guardian whereas the other lovers in Light in August, Joe and Joanna strip each other of humanity in their search for love. Joanna gradually becomes a symbol of everything that Joe has been running away from. She tries to impose upon him; her system of belief. She wants to put his life in order according to her set of beliefs. Joe is too twisted a personality to be manipulated. Throughout his life he has been running away from himself. He is unable to reconcile to his own identity. Joanna's so called love releases all the negative energy that he has accumulated since childhood. She combines in herself dwarfed sexuality and the rigidity of belief. Their relationship ends in disaster and death for both of them. Faulkner has explored in great detail the intuitional, emotional and mental behavior of man. His belief in the capacity of man not only to endure but also to prevail is the result of his fascination with all types of human characters, a fascination which resulted in the creation of a vast fictional world. What Faulkner has done in creating his imaginary world is to depict all kinds of people under all conditions of life and situations. One retains not only the impression of their distinct moral traits but also their mannerisms, their speech and their idiosyncrasies. Faulkner is undoubtedly a great writer, possibly the finest American novelist; an essential simplicity of mind is a part of his genius.

Faulkner possessed fecundity of the rare sort that one associates with Dickens, Balzac and Joyce. One finds in Faulkner no dearth of representation, innumerable compelling and unforgettable characters and narrative incidents which are compelling. Faulkner's courage as an artist as well his willingness to explore and expose every aspect in his novels has impressed his readers and critics alike. Alfred Kazin rightly observes:

"Faulkner possessed to a remarkable degree the coherence of imagination that marks the novelists of the first rank: the ability to sustain details in so long and dynamic a single period that they finally compose a single order of progression ("Faulkner in His Fury," The Inmost Leaf: A Selection of Essays, 268). Faulkner has the tendency to move toward the largest possible meaning. In order to achieve this end he never hesitated to employ motifs and devices which were big as well as familiar. Albert Camus, one of Faulkner's early admirers, once remarked that in Faulkner's Southern fiction what he liked most is "the heat and dust" (The Stillness of Light in August, 149).

No other American writer has spent as much energy propagandizing the myth of such a single civilization that thrived on patriarchal relations between magnanimous white masters and their devoted black slaves. No other writer has subjected that myth to such shattering, detailed criticism. Faulkner's works contain an elegiac lament for the good, old days- gone with the wind of the Civil War of 1861-1865-and a decided rejection of bourgeois relations based on clear self interest, as well frightening consciousness of degradation and inevitable transformation. He saw the South hysterically clutching at an illusionary formal greatness and the specific racial complex of being dependent on the people of lower stratum.

His chronicles of Yoknapatawpha County are undoubtedly, his most significant work. He not only created an extraordinary array of people and their lives but also made it stand as a parable or legend of all the Deep South. His best themes have always been of universal application. His narratives repeatedly start out with the typical Southern view of a close knit family relationship as providing the basic social unit in a community. Then such narratives consistently develop dramatic conflicts between relatives,

between Negros and Whites. But by the time Faulkner finishes any of his best narratives, he has managed to probe very deeply into various phases of man's calculated injustice and inhumanities to man, through the entire human family.

Just as time is treated as a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people, similarly there is no such thing as 'was' only 'is'. If 'was' existed there would be "no grief or sorrow" (Hoffman and Vickery ed., William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, 82). Faulkner believed that no man is himself; he is the sum of his past. Each individual is a continuation of something. Behind each individual stands history. There is "no such thing as was because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman and every moment" (Faulkner in the University, 84).

Faulkner has a definite moral aim in writing his novels. He does not believe in 'art for arts' sake. He rather believed that art is for the sake of human welfare and progress. He says that art is a vehicle of social awakening. Art should have a social purpose. Faulkner is accused of being a propagandist and didactic writer. But it is far from true. He does not preach. There is no moralizing in Faulkner. He honestly paints the ugly and insane picture of the American society in order to arouse the consciousness of the readers. Faulkner has a belief that the best novel has always sought to change man. Compassion, kindness and responsible self awareness are among the necessary virtues that Faulkner expects to be present in life of civilized people. Men must learn to modulate and curb their wills to power and bring their striving more in line with priorities of sane and reasonable living. Faulkner's identification with South can be misleading sometimes, because his range is not limited to a particular region or province. He starts his flight as a regional writer but he scales the height of a universal writer with his range of compassion and an intense understanding of the human heart. On numerous occasions Faulkner gave expression to his belief in the universality. His works have been translated into more than twenty five languages. "There has been growing international interest in Faulkner, quite independent of American or Southern concerns" (Hamblin and Abadiq, Faulkner in the Twenty First Centuries, 89).

Faulkner has been recognized as a sincere writer with an unflinching honest view of life. He was a conscientious artist and believed that the novel should be as much of a whole as a living organism, in which all component parts such as plot, dialogue, character, scenery are skillfully framed together giving the impression of a harmonious building.

To the non American readers and critics, Faulkner's work beginning in the thirties, with its images of violence, and of conformity, of impotence and bigotry, suppression of individuality and morality became the artistic model for the century. He employed the word 'ephemeral' to portray the contemporary society and its situations, without employing the existential connotations of immutability and exclusiveness. It stands to reason that he spoke as an idealist, with no pretensions to role of an ideologist.

CONCLUSION

Faulkner's fiction often defies the usual and familiar distinctions of comic and tragic. For example, his *Light in August*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!* the comic and the tragic mingle. Faulkner's entire universe is more than a slice carved out of the flow of time. It is the memory of a race, of a country whose secret disease is the amnesic lack of roots and traditions. Faulkner's work is a vast autobiography, not of one isolated individual but of the whole human group. Faulkner strikes all the readers as a world embracing writer because he speaks to them of the plight of man everywhere, with compassion and outrage. He wrote about "man's history his anguish, his triumph, his failures, the whole passion of breathing" (Faulkner in the University, 145).

His works sometimes give the feel of a tragedy in an old and understandable, sense of the word. But his vision is conditioned by his humanity, by his indomitable, comic and sorrowful quest towards the values necessary for survival. Many critics claim that Faulkner's view of life is the most pessimistic ever voiced in fiction and his writings are predominantly of melancholic tone. But Faulkner's deep pessimism does not proceed from a denial of values but from a melancholic recognition of great opposition of evil to the true values of life. Faulkner's much quoted Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech is enough and evidence of his hope, I believe 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 (Faulkner at Nagano, 205).

His final vision is hope: man is sinful but striving for the good, man shackled up by bonds within and without him but appearing to be free. His works reiterate his faith in man. His characters like Lucas, Charles, Gavins and Byron Bunch are the symbols of his faith in the ultimate goodness. The real strength is not in merely shunning the evil but in accepting the presence of it and having the courage to fight and erase it.

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