CHAPTER – III

AMERICAN SOUTH AND FAULKNER’S YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTY: A REFLECTION

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 a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God....(Faulkner’s interview with Jean Stein, Paris Review. 1956).

The above interview of William Faulkner proves to be a testimonial that shows he has discovered the fictional and imaginary land, which he loves to call ‘Yoknapatawpha County,’ the land of his dream, the land which is the perfect place for him to write his novels. The outcome of his dream desire is visualized in his The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Absalom, Absalom! and so on. The relevance of ‘Yoknapatawpha County is brought through the ‘little postage stamp’ which is highly appreciated and admired by him because it is his mother land. Faulkner loved his mother land profoundly. It is his dear land i.e., Mississippi in American South. He said that he can create a cosmos of his own land and make his county people to be heard and seen everywhere like God.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to discuss the social and literary background to William Faulkner’s American South and his imaginary fictional land i.e., Yoknapatawpha County. This chapter reflects the impact of American South and
Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County on his novels in general and *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* in particular. It describes Yoknapatawpha County which has become the microcosm of American South and it has been the successful background for Faulkner’s novels.

William Faulkner has excelled in inventing the fictional and imaginary land, which became the solid basis for his literary work. “William Faulkner is one of the most influential writers in modern American literature. Specifically his works reflect the distinct heritage of the American South. The Northern region of Mississippi where Faulkner lived all his life provided the geographical and cultural background for the county of his novels and short stories” (Lewis 135). The great Southern writer of the Yoknapatawpha County, he is identified with the American South and it is quite natural that his fiction is filled with references to history, geography, customs, and his prose often employs its special idiom. American South has become the rich setting for his novels and short stories.

Experimentation and imagination laid Faulkner to find the Yoknapatawpha County. His major concern was to reflect his County in the form of fiction. He was also a writer with technical excellence. He used it to the extreme to give the readers the best fiction of his times. He attained success in using the narrative techniques in an innovative manner with the help of this social background of American South. Faulkner’s inner most concern for the people of the deep South after the Civil War has been appreciated by modern readers.

He was interested to learn about the relation between the Southern tradition and Southern slavery to which he is bound to return. He has created a profound and complex body of work in which he often explored the exploitation and corruption in
the American South or Southern part of North America. Many of Faulkner's novels and short stories have been set in Yoknapatawpha County, which reflects the geographical and cultural background of his native Mississippi. Faulkner's works frequently reflect the chaotic life history of the South while developing insightful explorations of the human character.

Majority of his novels deal about the life lead by the natives of Mississippi. He called his birth place as Oxford by different names-such as Jefferson, Lafayette County, and finally he felt proud to call it as Yoknapatawpha County. It is the County which is recognized as the microcosm of the American South, as it reflects the life and culture of the people of that particular region. From his early childhood he witnessed depression, frustration, down fall of economy, social injustice of the people. He had an inner urge to write about them, their poverty and mental disorder which they had been experiencing after the Civil War. The tragedy of the South after the Civil War is expressed with a variety of narrations in his fiction and it became the subject of his work.

Sherwood Anderson, his close friend from Yoknapatawpha County, encouraged Faulkner. He suggested to Faulkner to write about Mississippi in his works because he was very much familiar with its background. A. Robert Lee a Britisher working at Nihon University as a Professor of American Literature said that, “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 upbringing” (Lee 11).

The small town, the County Mississippi, race, fundamentalist Christianity, stunning inwardness with the physicality of land, and an ear for the ironies of local
speech, were the subject of Faulkner’s fiction. 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.

Robert Penn Warren, the poet, critic, novelist, and a teacher in Kentucky USA, has considered Faulkner as a bright young introvert with a rebellious spirit who might have viewed the prospect of spending his or her life in a small Southern town like Oxford, Mississippi, during the early part of the twentieth century:

The South which Faulkner had grown up in particularly the rural South was cut-off, inward-turning, backward-looking. It was a culture frozen in its virtues and vices, 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 the more precious for the fact that its yield had been meager (Penn Warren 3-4).

Faulkner is very much concerned with the decline of the American South and gradually he began to write about the Old South, Civil War, Reconstruction of the South and the past. ‘Yoknapatwpha 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 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.
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,” (Ramanathan 9) for this, Faulkner indicated that he was not having any answer for that. 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 answered: ‘It’s my country; my native land and I love it. I am not trying to satirize it.’ He accepted that the South had its faults and tries to correct them, but he also said –and this is most important- “I will not try to correct them when I am writing a story because I am writing about people then” (Faulkner, Quoted in Ramanathan S. 23). In other words, as a writer he felt that it was his duty to teach them the moral indirectly, to improve their standard of living.

Faulkner’s works reflect the distinct heritage of the American South. The Northern region where Faulkner lived all his life provided the geographical and cultural background for the Yoknapatwpha County of his novels and short stories. “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. In Sanctuary he portrayed the violent underworld of the South and the seduction of Temple Drake by Popeye” (Serafin 1).

The Southern United States or the South, or the Southern part of North America is known colloquially as Dixie, which constitutes a distinctive region covering a large portion of the United States, with its own unique heritage, historical perspective, customs, musical styles, and cuisine. There are some overlaps with the Southwest, Midwest, and the Mid-Atlantic States. The Southern region of the United
States includes sixteen states, and is split into three smaller units, or divisions: The South Atlantic States are: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia; the East South Central States are Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee; and the West South Central States of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.
In the novels or in the entire literary works of William Faulkner, the regionalism is the omnipresent thing which remained as the spirit of the North American South. This spirit of regionalism made him to go into the inner depth of the mind of the people of the Yoknapatawpha County and he studied their exploitation and depression which they faced after the Civil War. In one of his major novels i.e. Absalom, Absalom! Quentin Compson, is asked, the following words:

*Tell about the south, what it’s like there*
*What do they do there, why do they live there,*
*Why do they live at all?*

Quentin Compson’s reply is:

*You can’t understand it. You’d have to be born there* (Dorman, James H. Qtd from Absalom, Absalom! 1989. 411).

But Quentin Compson goes on at some length to try to tell Shreve McCannon, a Canadian and a character in Absalom, Absalom! about the South, until Shreve says:

*Now I want you to tell me just one thing more. Why do you hate the South? I don’t hate it, says Quentin quickly. I don’t hate it, he thinks, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark. I don’t hate it* (ibid. 423).

But clearly there is hatred mixed with his love; this same ambivalence is present in the complex attitude of Ike McCaslin in Go Down Moses (1942). In the course of a single sentence he professed first his love for this land for which God has done so much with woods for guns and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to nurture it and serene falls to harvest
it and short, mild winters for men and animals. Then the sentence goes on to express the hate:

This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derived in two generations, where white men rent farms and live like niggers and niggers crop on shares and live like animals (Dorman, James H. Qtd from Absalom, Absalom! 1989: 411).

It was with these mixed feelings that Faulkner created his Yoknapatawpha County, signed himself on its map as its sole proprietor, and traced its declining dynasties: the Compsons from *The Sound and the Fury* and Bundrens from *As I Lay Dying*, the Sartorises from *The Unvanquished* and the Sutpens from *Absalom, Absalom!*, the Snopes from *The Hamlet*, its carpet bagging interlopers, and last but not least, silent but increasingly vocal, the black population.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin Compson expresses his thoughts in interior monologue about the South;

*I am from south. You are funny, aren’t you. O yes I knew it was somewhere in the country. You are funny aren’t you. You ought to join the circus. I did. That’s how I ruined my eyes watering the elephant’s fleas. Three times these country girls* (*The Sound and the Fury* 57).

In Faulkner’s view, “the South’s condition was partially similar to the disintegration of the ancient classical world, which likes the South after the Civil War, left behind only bits and pieces of cultural luxury, and consequently, torn, floundering spirits. Such a view afforded his fiction epic dimensions, for he depicted a doomed
and accursed people who continued to cling to a lingering, anachronistic cultural structure and mentality” (Serafin 2)

Traditionally, the American South is strong enough in maintaining the spirit of regional consciousness which remained stronger and more powerful in all the Southern States of North America. This ‘historical lag’ or struggle is the source of whatever is the distinctive in the Southern thought, feeling, life and culture. After its defeat in the Civil War, the South could not participate fully and freely in the normal development of American society, that is, industrialism and large scale capitalism.

When the Reconstruction period had started, New England regional consciousness was in decline and by the turn of the century the same was probably true for the Midwest; but the South, because it was a pariah region or because its insubordination in defeat, forced the rest of the nation to treat it as such, and felt its sectional identity most acutely during the very decades when the United States was becoming a self conscious nation. While the other regions submitted to dissolution, the South struggled desperately to keep itself intact. Through an exercise of will, it insisted that the regional memory is the main shaper of its life.

After the Civil War, the South had little of course to give to it’s people. It nurtured it’s people with 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 to accept it’s dominant American values. It had been left behind. It was living on the margin of the history. The position of the South often provides the sharpest perspective on history.

Some decades after the defeat of the South, it’s writers could maintain a relation to American life comparable in miniature to the relation in the nineteenth
century between Russian writers and European life. The Russian writers of the
nineteenth century could examine the bourgeois morality and managed to use the
backwardness of the country. But the Southern writer did not have to cast about for
his materials; he hardly enjoyed a spontaneous choice in his use of them, for they
welled within him like a dream recurrent since childhood. It is William Faulkner who
has given a vivid romantic description of this subject in *Intruder in the Dust* (1948):

> For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he
> wants it, there is the instance when it’s still not two o’clock on that
> July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail
> fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are
> already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with long oiled
> ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other
> looking up the hill waiting for Long street to give the word and it’s all
> in the balance, it hasn’t happened yet, it hasn’t even
> begun…. (Faulkner’s, *Intruder in the Dust* Qtd in Jenkins, Mckay.

But of course it has happened, it must begin. The basic Southern subject is the
defeat of the homeland, though it’s presentation can vary from the romancing parts of
*Sartoris* to the despairing estimate of social loss in *The Sound and the Fury*. Allen
Tate, the Southern writer is one who defines the Southern subject as “the destruction
by war and the later degradation by carpetbaggers and scalawags, and a consequent
lack of moral force and imagination in the cynical materialism of the New South”
(Howe 23-24). The Southern writer could romanticize the defeat of homeland, reject
it, enlarge it into an image of the general human situation; he could not escape it. And
precisely this present subject matter provided him with some very considerable advantages.

Before the Civil War, Nathaniel Hawthorne, an American novelist and short story writer, had remarked on the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity. But now the War and Reconstruction gave the Southern writers all that Hawthorne had found lacking— all but antiquity.

Literature is concerned; the coming of the war brought some significant changes in the situation of the Southern writer. The writer of the South had to express his loyalty more openly in his work, whether he wished it or not, even those authors like William Gilmore Simms the poet, novelist and historian from the American South achieved great prominence during the nineteenth century. He wrote eight novels. Among them *The Partisan* (1835) is an important work. Nineteenth-century American poet John Reuben Thompson had earlier defended the Southern way. Both the writers were now expected to defend it even more consistently. “The war led to the compromises and the exigencies and difficulties of composition and publication. But the subsequent defeat of the Confederacy resulted in a serious though ultimately temporary discouragement of literature” (Rubin 177).

The interest in the community, the land and the people, the poor white and the black man as well as the planter, the language of all levels not only characterizes the writing of the period but also suggests ties with the past of Simms and Longstreet and also looks forward to the works of William Faulkner, Wolfe Warren and Welty. Thus the writing of the period 1861-1920, even though separated from its immediate past
by a war and from its future by another conflict of an even greater scope, is in important ways related both to its past and its future.

The literature of the Civil War era is the perennial poor relation of Southern literature. With the exception of Henry Timrod, an American poet and the poet laureate of the Confederacy, no major Southern writer is linked inextricably with the War years and in almost every comprehensive study of literature in the South. The Civil War years were important for the development of Southern literature in several ways. First, the formation of Confederacy and its national call to arms encouraged in Southerners an examination of their regional identity. Secondly, the war forced the South to rely more fully on its own literary resources rather than on those of New England or Europe. Southern writers addressed their work to men and women who shared their cultural background and concerns.

It is the South’s mythical landscape that has provided rich inspiration for the imaginations and intuitions of some of America’s most distinguished authors to show their concern for the depressed society in the form of literature.

*Beyond the porch the saliva bed lay in an unbearable glare of white light, in clamorous splashes. Beyond it the drive shimmered with heat until, arched over with locust and oak, it descended in a cool green tunnel to the gates and the sultry ribbon of the highroad. Beyond the road fields spread away shimmering, broken here and there by motionless clumps of wood, on to the hills dissolving bluely in the July haze* (Faulkner, *Sartoris*, 202-203).

The citation which is described above is one of the typical literary images of American South. These images include not only the scenery of the state of
Mississippi, with long dusty roads weaving through the dry land, and the fabulous Mississippi river running down to Louisiana’s mysterious swamps. They also portray the rolling mountains and valleys of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia, the Florida’s humid subtropics and much more. They constitute their images also on the people living in the South; farmers, slaves, plantation masters and their ladies, shopkeepers and others have been great story-tellers.

According to Shelby Foote, an American historian and novelist wrote *The Civil War: A Narrative,* (1958) a massive, three-volume history of the war and said, ‘I’ve never known Southerners do anything but tell stories’ (Foote 167). Thus, writers combined these oral traditions, the political rhetoric, preaching, conversational wordplay, and lazy-day storytelling and the diverse topography of the South and converted them into remarkable artistic literary images.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Spanish became the first to import European folktales into the South. The Spanish left a strong cultural imprint on the areas like Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana where the planting colonies were explored from Texas to California. Charles Joyner further declares that, following the Spanish, French settlers in South Carolina and especially in Louisiana brought zestful versions of such Gallic narratives.

One could argue that literature in the American South began as early as 1608 when the explorer and adventurer Captain John Smith, an American pioneering spirit and one of the first authors to write about the Southern landscape's beauty and promise, published his promotional pamphlet ‘*A True Relation of occurrences and accidents in Virginia,*’ which, many consider it to be the first book written in English in the American colonies. Though other books had been written about the New World
before this time, Smith was the first colonist to write primarily for other settlers rather than exclusively for patrons or posterity. Or, to move ahead a hundred years, perhaps Southern letters began with the secret diaries, character sketches, poems, and satiric prose.

Later on, during the revolutionary period, Thomas Jefferson the lawyer, architect, educator, scientist, philosopher, governor of Virginia, Secretary of state, Vice President, and President of the United States, served as the intellectual center of rational and enlightened thoughts about the American political state, the foundations of society, and the nature of man. Although he wrote only one full length book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, (1785) it collects the answers which Jefferson prepared for questions posed to him about Virginia. It is both a compilation of data and a vigorous and often eloquent argument about the nature of the good society, which Jefferson saw incarnated in Virginia. It was through his composition of the text of the ‘Declaration of Independence’ (1776) which is a statement adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. The Declaration is a formal explanation of why Congress had voted on July 2, 1776 to declare independence from Great Britain more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War. The birthday of the United States of America-Independence day is celebrated on July 4, the day, the wording of the Declaration was approved by the Congress. Jefferson had a lasting and profound impact on history of the political, social, and cultural life of the South and the nation. Political and economic leadership in the South by the end of the eighteenth century had moved from Virginia to South Carolina, especially Charleston, when it became clear that raw cotton was to be the essential product of the state and the region and that slavery was therefore necessary to the future.
In one of the bookstores, members of the so-called ‘Charleston School’ gathered. The most influential member of the group, and probably in his time the best-known Southern writer, was William Gilmore Simms, the editor of periodicals and author of over eighty volumes of history, poetry, criticism, biography, drama, essays, stories, and novels. He was one of the first to make writing a profession. William Gilmore Simms' only serious rival as a writer in the South was Baltimore politician, John Pendleton Kennedy, whose informal fictional sketches in *Swallow Barn* (1832) helped to establish the plantation and the tradition novel, which in it’s depiction of a mythic genteel past and an ideal social structure has found hundreds of imitators in American romance fiction. The only writer of the South before the War to rise to a level of national and international prominence was Edgar Allan Poe. Although he was raised in Richmond, attended the University of Virginia, and edited the *Southern Literary Messenger*, he turned away from regional materials for the most part in his poetry, fiction, and criticism to devote himself to a form of literary expression that aspired to universality in style and structure.

The Civil War and its consequences changed the South forever. The event in the same year proved to be the most influential for Southern history. Lawrence A. Rowe, an Emeritus Professor of California University expressed that, “the outcome of the Civil War signified the victory of nationalism over regional interests. With the increasing move toward urbanization and industrialization following the War and the concurrent diminishing of regional differences, it is not surprising that there was a developing nostalgia for remaining regional differences” (Wilson.1989).

Thus, the new local colored or regional literature emerged, focusing on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features of a particular specific
region. The terms, regionalism and local color are sometimes used interchangeably; ‘regionalism’ generally has broader connotations. Whereas ‘local color’ is often applied to a specific literary mode that flourished in the late nineteenth century, regionalism implies recognition from the colonial period to the present of differences among specific areas of the country. Additionally, regionalism refers to an intellectual movement encompassing regional consciousness beginning in the thirties.

The primary subject matter of local color movement revolved around peculiarities of speech, quaint local customs, distinctive modes of thought, and stories about human nature. Donna Campbell in his Regionalism provides typical characteristics for a local color story: “its common setting was frequently remote and inaccessible, surrounded by nature, and the characters were marked by their adherence to the old ways, by dialect and by particular personality traits central to the region. The narrator, serving as mediator between the rural folk and the urban audience to whom the tale was directed, was typically an educated observer from the world beyond, who learnt something enlightening from the characters. The plot was usually simple, included lots of storytelling and revolved around the community and its rituals, while the theme displayed an antipathy to change and a certain degree of nostalgia for an always-past golden age”(Campbell 305).

Overland Monthly a popular magazine published between nineteenth and twentieth century became the base for the writers to popularize the ‘local color movement.’ This promoted poets like Bret Harte to write in detail the accounts of pioneering life in California. The stories provided the true account of the life led by people in the mining camps. Since then, many sketches and short stories about simpler times and faraway places appeared in magazines, and several local color
novels started to be published, too. Many writers joined the movement, for example George Washington Cable, Kate Chopin, Thomas Nelson Page, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Joel Chandler Harris, Mary Wilkins Freeman and many others. The most prominent local colorist, however, was Samuel Langhorne Clemens, or Mark Twain, who introduced the local color fiction to the whole world. His masterwork, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (1885) was the most incisive satire ever written of Southern attitudes, customs, and mores, aside from its central importance as a pivotal work of American literature. In Clemens, frontier humor was brought to a high level of literary artistry and through Clemens was transmitted to the majority of the subsequent practicing humorists.

Southern local color flourished until the 1890’s, after which this genteel mode of writing lost popularity. Several Southern writers like New Critics John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, started a Southern intellectual movement by publishing the manifesto called ‘*I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.*’ They argued that the South, having held on to its agrarian culture longer than the rest of the country, could serve as a model for a society in which man rather than the machine was dominant.

Together with the intellectual movement, there was a corresponding literary movement known as the Southern Renaissance, which, although not always parallel to the intellectual movement in its philosophic principles, also emphasized the importance of regional setting and tradition to individuals’ lives. In other words, Southern Renaissance writers, often employing modernistic means of expression, sought through the exploration of specific characters and places, answers to the questions of life and death that concern all people. In the decades that followed, such
writers as Flannery O’Connor, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty and Walker Percy, have continued to place characters and action in the South, too.

With this background Faulkner had the base to write of his imaginary county, with it’s half-real, half-imaginary characters. He presents 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 that of his town, county, and the South. All the books in the Yoknapatawpha County series are related, later events steaming from action in earlier stories. Sometimes in the process of its evolution an incident occurs in one story and is explained in another, or a character is introduced in one book and is used in another book without introductory remarks. The earlier writers paved him the way to deal with the ongoing socio-economic problems of the South.

The word ‘Yoknapatawpha County’ is derived from two Chickasaw words ‘Yocona’ and ‘Petopha’. It means ‘split land.’ Faulkner claimed that the compound word means ‘water flowing slow through the flatland,’ though this is unverified. Yoknapatawpha was the original name for the actual Yocona River, a tributary of the Tallahatchie which runs through the Southern part of Lafayette County of which Oxford is the seat.

Yoknapatawpha County to him was the land of his heart’s desire, which he expressed, celebrated, glorified, and made known to the world through his fiction. He devoted his time in bringing out the detailed aspects of the life of chaos which the people experienced in that part of American South. He was inspired by Lafayette County, which is geographically located in the map of American South. The result of his long cherished dream made him to pay a rich tribute to salute his land and adoring
it as he felt proud to call it, ‘my apocryphal county,’ which comprises both soil and soul of American South, inviting comparison between its mythical and real history.

Faulkner’s Fictional and Imaginary Land

Fig-5
Faulkner has provided all the geographical details of Yoknapatawpha County before the readers to give a clear picture of his dream land. This fictional county has an area of 2,400 square miles (6,200 square kilometers). Most of the eastern half (as well as a small part of the southwest corner) of the county is pine hill county. The area was originally Chickasaw land. White settlement started around the year 1800. Prior to the Civil War, the county consisted of several large plantations: Louis Grenier’s in the South east, McCaslin's in the North east, Sutpen's in the North west, and Compson's and Sartoris's in the immediate vicinity of Jefferson. Later, the county became mostly small farms. “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. There 16,587 housing units at an average density of 26 per square mile. The racial makeup of the county was 71.85% white, 25.05% Black or African American, 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”


It is, and it is not, a place that one could recognize, describe and photograph. But, this ambivalence only hinge on the uncertainty of the boundaries between the Romanesque territory and geographical territory. One knows how quickly these spaces merge and become one, constituting a common familiarity. “The Faulknerian territory is above all topological; that is to say, it is not given as a complete entity from the beginning. The space is constructed through a series of steps, successive investigations, onward movements and traverses. These carry the name of the author’s fictional works” (Durand 2). Yoknapatwpha County furnished the setting for his
fiction. It is a life cycle of the essential American South from Plantation days through the Civil War, down to the World War and the present.

Such a theme demands an observation wide enough to evaluate the new industrial South and its problems. But Faulkner has presented a series of novel fragments, each in turn disintegrated by separable passages of verbal experimentation. Malcolm Cowley thinks that Faulkner’s work might be divided into a number of cycles; one about the planters and the descendents, one about the town people of Jefferson, one about the Indians (consisting of stories already written but never brought together). “If a division by families is adopted there would be Compson Sartoris Saga, the McCaslin Saga, dealing with the white and black descendents of Carothers McCaslin and Ratiff Bundren Saga, devoted to the backwood farmers of Frenchman’s Bend. “All the cycles or saga are closely interconnected; it is as if each new book was a chord or segment of total situation always existing in the author’s mind” (Cowley 9). It is Faulkner himself who mapped this territory twice. The first time was in 1936 for Absalom, Absalom! and the second, in 1945 for the ‘Viking Portable Faulkner.’ The more anecdotal and descriptive is the first one. The second one is more condensed and more refined comparing to first one in which the titles of the novels are indicated in big capital letters. They determine the rather large zones of influence which intersect and mingle intimately, sheltering within them the secret, fictional recesses. These zones, in fact designate void spaces of pure potentiality which only exist through the piling up of events which happened there. The events are, in themselves, interchangeable, an interminable metonymy of cross references. This is a fleeting, moving space of relics and ephemeral immobility.
Attempts to interpret William Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha County as an entity with symbolic geographysical meaning are varied. They range from some hazy contours of American Southern land to that of Gabriel Vahanian, who has termed Faulkner’s world “a historical map of the Christian tradition and a spiritual geography of Christendom” (Vahanian, Gabriel. 1964). One interpretation of geographysical symbolism of Faulkner’s county is paramount- that “Yoknapatawpha is really a microcosm of the American South” (Cowley 1980:131). But, much evidence refutes the idea that Faulkner looked upon and presented Yoknapatawpha as the South in miniature and rather, supports the contention that he regarded his county as a place within the South.

“Outstanding among the evidences that Yoknapatawpha is not the South in miniature are the geographysical parallels between the real Lafayette County and Oxford, Mississippi, and the fictional Yoknapatawpha County and Jefferson” (Aiken 1-21). In *The Reivers* (1962) and in *Big Woods* (1953) Faulkner tells us that the locations of Sutpen’s one hundred square mile plantation and wilderness where young Ike McCaslin, Boon Hoggenbeck and Lion hunted the bear, Old Ben, have disappeared beneath the waters of a lake, thirty feet below the surface of the government built flood control reservoir whose bottom is rising gradually and inexorably each year on another layer of beer cans and bottle tops and lost bass plugs” (Faulkner, *Big Woods* 170).

Faulkner’s County cannot be classified as local history because Yoknapatawpha County does not exist; it is a fictional world created by him. Instead, Faulkner's County is a highly readable history of Lafayette County on which Faulkner's mythical Yoknapatawpha County is loosely based. To this task Don H
Doyle, the McCausland Professor of History at the University of South Carolina further brings his mastery of the tools of the new social history already exhibited in his studies of Jacksonville, Illinois, and Nashville. “Faulkner's County is solidly based on tax and census records, supplemented by exhaustive research in manuscript collections, newspapers, and oral histories. These are enriched by frequent references to Faulkner's sixteen novels and numerous short stories about Yoknapatawpha” (Doyle 458). The large-scale geography of Yoknapatawpha County is essentially the large scale geography of Lafayette County. According to Charles S. Aiken “Yoknapatawpha County is a place within the South by examining the small scale setting of the fictional county in relation to the Upland and Lowland South and to the rural and urban South” (Aiken 2009:21).

The Yoknapatwpha novels and stories span more than a century and a half, of history from 1800 to 1950s and they center on one particular place, Lafayette County, Mississippi; a place whose landscape, people, events, and history all bear strong resemblance to those of his imaginary place. What makes the Yoknapatwpha saga historical is not just that each story is deliberately set in the past; Faulkner also took great care to develop a continuing cast of characters, families, landmarks, and folklore and to envelope all in a process of change over time. Without knowing anything about the actual history of the place, the Yoknapatwpha stories parallel. The readers of Faulkner cannot help but be impressed with the realism of rendering. Nearly every page in some way documents the details of ordinary life, above all the speech, its idioms and dialects, and also the dress, the manners, work, leisure, food and countless other folk customs. “The land, the people, and their history, Robert Penn Warren wrote, come to us at a realistic, at the level of recognition” (Penn Warren 3-4).
Yoknapatwpha resembles R.K.Narayan’s Malgudi and Thomas Hardy’s Wessex. Malgudi is a fictitious town in India created by R.K.Narayan in his novels and short stories. It forms the setting for most of Narayan's works. Starting with his first novel, ‘Swami and Friends,’ all but one of his fifteen novels and most of his short stories take place here. Narayan has successfully portrayed Malgudi as a microcosm of India. Whereas Faulkner portrayed Yoknapatwpha as the microcosm of the American South. Malgudi is located in South India, where as Yoknapatwpha is located in American South. Similarly Thomas Hardy, the English author set all of his major novels in the South and Southwest of England. He named the area ‘Wessex’ after the medieval Anglo-Saxon Kingdom that existed in this part of that country prior to the Norman Conquest.

William Faulkner seems to produce his best work when writing about his imaginary Yoknapatawpha County. It is a mythical county in Northern Mississippi, the author's own locale, is inhabited by characters that Faulkner has created in the image of the people who actually live there, or who have lived there, so that sometimes it is hard to draw a line between the real and the imaginary. The author has incorporated into his stories about Yoknapatawpha County much of the culture and folkways of the people who live in the real county. Many of his characters are typical folk types, such as the Southern plantation owner, the peddler or drummer, the country storekeeper, the tenant farmer, the farmer's wife, the moonshiner, the horse trader, and the Negro servant. Tall tales, anecdotes, and yarns are another form of folklore used by Faulkner, and in colorful local dialect, these characters make wisecracks, quote proverbs, and make humorous conversations.

History, family, race, class, gender, relations have been the basic factors for Faulkner’s creation of American South. His South has been presented, in contrast to its historical picture that is based on facts and is, therefore, more or less objective, unquestionable, and unchangeable, in a more fictional and subjective way; it is a recollection of his past and inscribed in the writer’s memory as his main source of inspiration.

Faulkner was constantly influenced by the U. S. South, it’s history, and the impact of that history on Southern present which he had experienced as a native. The U. S. South also gave him a hope of universal deliverance, and a source of inexhaustible literary inspiration. For Faulkner, the very existence of universal Southern present is unquestionable since “there is no such thing as was – only ‘is.’ If was existed, there would be no grief or sorrow” (Faulkner Qtd in Stein 1963:82). Driven by such an impulse he created a world describable as “a kind of keystone in the universe and the method Faulkner used to create his keystone in the universe was never a historical one. Instead, he talked to people” (Cantwell 51-66). According to Malcolm Cowley, “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 and reconstructed by Faulkner” (Cowley 131). But although Faulkner’s South, according to C. Vann Woodward, a pre-eminent American historian, focusing primarily on the American South and race relations, represents the supreme re-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 very consistent ideas or theories about Southern history. In the universality of their meaning they are more, and in their immediate application less, than that” (Woodward 34).

The second point in the historical development of the U. S. South, which could basically be defined in terms of fall, is presented by the Civil War and Reconstruction. “It could be said that in the author’s canon that 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 Compsons – and the Postbellum South dominated by the Snopeses and Popeyes” (Miller 204).

When Faulkner wrote about the Civil War, he used the self-created characters and historical data as well: e.g., Faulkner’s great grandfather Colonel William C. Falkner was the model for the character of Colonel John Sartoris. His descriptions of the Civil War, Southern front-line and Southern home-front are not exaggerated. They are responsible not only to Southern military defeat but also to the destruction of
principles that formed the core of Southern society. The War caused the instability of labor 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 surrounding plantations, including Sartoris’s, were destroyed, and those that survived, had to cope with the lack of money, food and labor, with uncultivated and impoverished land.

Faulkner contributed to the creation of Southern Civil War history in one more way. He presented it not only from men warriors’ perspective but also from a perspective of women, children and slaves who were left behind, at home-front. Faulkner’s novel Absalom, Absalom! depicts masterfully the Civil War period from the home-front point of view” (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 125-126). The Civil War was followed by reconstruction. The U. S. South, as the loser in the war, was facing economic and political break-down. Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha went through the same experience. The war left traces on Thomas Sutpen’s and General Compson’s plantations.

The third point in the historical development of the Southern society, which could be defined in terms of reconstruction, is marked by the New South, when, owing to rapid urbanization and industrialization inspired by belief that history should be forgotten and that economic development should be paid more attention than politics, race and class segregation grew even worse. Faulkner’s new South became home for a class in growth of lawyers, judges, bankers, shop owners. He presented it in characters of Manfred De Spain, banker and mansion owner, Judge Drake; Horace Benbow, who “was a lawyer, principally through a sense of duty to family
tradition” (Faulkner, Sartoris 149). Will Varner, who owned the store and the cotton gin and the combined grist mill and the blacksmith shop.

The New South also became a refuge for the people who did not get used so well to the new situation: white and black share croppers. They were ruined by the low cotton prices and great dependency on landlords and shop keepers. Whereas some of them “were challenging the power of the planters and townspeople, many were also quietly rising economically and socially, abandoning the washed-out land and endless drudgery of rural life for opportunities in the town” (Doyle 30). One of these numerous families who tried to change their status after the Civil War and reconstruction was the Snopes family. Unlike the rest of families who did not manage to change anything, the Snopes succeeded in achieving their design. They became the synonym for global breakthrough of white lower class who cared only for profit and status and for whom the end justified the means.

The traditional Southern values of family and community influenced William Faulkner. He was convinced, according to his biographer Joseph Blotner that, “character came out of family. Environment was important too, he granted, but it was mostly a matter of genetics. He also used what would later be called the South’s concept of the ‘extended family’” (Blotner 197). The story about his South is actually a story about generations of families of different races and class origins which are situated in a typical Southern community with its own problems, vices, virtues, and particularities. By using such kind of narrative structure Faulkner followed the well-known pattern of genealogical novel which places one or more families in time and space and depicts their origin, growth, and fall.
Family, as a basic social unit, is the key stone of Faulkner’s world. Consequently, the traditional system of values, family pride, and legacy of glorious past are the main motives that determine actions and behaviors of majority of his characters. Each of Faulkner’s family is usually presented in four stages that could, according to Olga W. Vickery in her paper “The Contours of Time, be called elemental being, doing, thinking, and remembering” (Vickery 261). 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. With land cultivation and civilization of land, the ground for the second stage was prepared. Plantations were built and dynasties were founded. The third stage, a stage of thinking, followed. It was characterized by distancing from action and domination, and by withdrawal in thoughts and metaphysics. This generation was interested in abstractions and universal principles of tradition that they had inherited; it was interested in theory, but failed when practical solutions should have been applied. The last stage was the stage of remembering. This stage, in majority of families, denoted the end, or destruction of family as a traditional institution. The most, or at least some of these stages can be found in the stories about the Sartorises, Compsons, Sutpens, McCaslins, Snopeses and Bundrens.

Besides using the model of Southern history and the traditional institution of family as main creative principles, Faulkner’s fiction relies on some other elements of the actual structure of the American South. One of them is the determinant of ‘race’ which is not seen as an essential, or biological, part of a person’s identity but rather as a social construct or product. Although sometimes hesitant, Faulkner’s attitude to race could be described as more tolerant, more acceptable, and more positive than the one that at that time represented the mainstream of Southern race ideology. His concept of
race was mainly based on the paternalistic study of black and white race and its social-economic definition. According to Joseph Blotner, Faulkner blamed undeveloped Southern economy for discrimination and bad living conditions of Southern African Americans. He thought that these problems were based on “the fear that given equality before the law, the hard-working Negro would take the white man’s economy away from him. Faulkner found discrimination shameful, and believed that the freedom of speech and action should first be exercised at home. And despite the prejudices, which he as a Southerner had, Faulkner 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” (Blotner 679).

Faulkner’s literary work also follows this principle because it is based on the idea of guilt and debt. He distinguishes between various kinds of debt and this differentiation is highlighted in his fictional approach to slavery. “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” (Dussere 40).

For Faulkner, Slavery with the main emphasis on dehumanization and objectification of a human being was a curse which affected not only the land but also the people. It became one of the dominant motives in his works of fiction. Absalom, Absalom! thus ends with Jim Bond, “the scion, the last of his [Sutpen’s] race,” (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 376) who comes from a family Sutpen rejected and forgot because he “found out that his [great grand] mother was part negro” (ibid. 355).
Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* shows that racial intolerance was not something that was genetically inherited but something that was culturally passed from generation to generation, from man to man… Racism in the U. S. South, as Faulkner explains it through Sutpen’s example, functioned as a reward which had been given to the poor whites by the upper class in order to lessen social inequalities. “By giving 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” (Railey 41-55).

The saga of Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha follows all principles that are the basis of real and fictional world: geographical location, historical roots, population structured in families whose genealogy could be traced for decades, or centuries in some cases, and the existence of races in the U.S.A. It has been defined by the determinant of class as well. But, since Faulkner’s literary work takes family for its basic unit and main social institution, the class in Yoknapatawpha is present in its most elementary forms. However, it could be distinguished among three main classes in Yoknapatawpha: the planters’ class, the middle class, and the poor whites’ class.

Faulkner divides the planters’ class into old aristocracy: the ancestors of a few European noblemen or commoners whose origin can be traced for centuries and whose representatives are the Sartorises; and new planters, plebeians, who acquired their plantations by fraud or plunder and whose representatives are Thomas Sutpen, McCaslins and Compsons. Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha is also populated by picturesque representatives of the middle class. The majority of them are wealthy middle class men: there are Will Varner, a wealthy shop owner, lawyers, Gavin
Stevens and Horace Benbow, commercial traveler, V. K. Ratliff, judge, Drake, Northerners Burdens; the rest belong to the category of Southern Yankees.

The last class group in Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha is the class of poor whites or ‘poor white trash.’ The Bundrens, Tulls, Armstids, Lena Grove and many others are some of them. Unlike the Compsons, Sutpens and Snopes poor whites who are masterfully presented by the Bundren family in *As I Lay Dying* (1930), are people who can be understood and sympathized with. The Bundrens are, unlike the Compsons, able to respect the code of honor, and, in doing so, they rise above the usual level of behavior and thinking uniquely for their class. In being human and caring they proved their ability for dreams and aspirations. And in paying respect to their mother’s last wish they proved their ability to keep the promise given to her.

Gender is another factor of Yoknapatawpha’s structure that should be paid attention to. Since the basic unit of Yoknapatawpha’s social structure is the family based on male and patriarchal authority, woman has in it an inferior, but clearly defined role: she presents property on marriage market and functions as the means of preserving her husband’s family name. During antebellum period “Southern white womanhood … [was] marked by fear of male violence and yet dependence on male authority, by male adulation as ‘better than human’ and male degradation as ‘less than man’” (Jones 56).

The misogyny of sexual and gender relations in the Old South was even more visible in the example of Southern black womanhood. African American woman had two or even three functions: as a slave she worked in the fields or in the house as a mother and a slave and by giving birth to her children, made new property for her master; as a woman she was forced to satisfy sexual needs of both her master and her
husband. “For the white man, the Negress was the female animalized and his white woman was the female spiritualized. It was as if the planter was trying to make up to his white woman for his faithlessness and duplicity” (Backman 602). Women, black and white alike, were forced to live together; they were tied by miscegenation of their masters and separated by race and class laws of the Old South. White Southerners knew that and lived with that although it was against the proclaimed Southern principles of honor, pride, family, and decency.

After the Civil War, and with the abolition of slavery, open sexual transgressions of white Southerners became less obvious. They were replaced by other problems: doubts in Southern masculinity and worry about chastity and sexual purity/safety of white women.

Although the Southern woman willingly slipped again into her historically determined role, some changes in her sexual and cultural role were inevitable. She was not satisfied with man’s perceptions of her any more since he tried to control her female being and put her in the role that he, as a creator of representative power, created for her. This discrepancy, expressed in Quentin Compson’s question: “Why couldn’t it have been me and not her [Caddy] who is unvirgin” (The Sound and the Fury 96) becomes one of his main existential problems. He did not manage to match reality “Women only use other people’s codes of honor,” (ibid. 217) and half-forgotten codes of Southern past “I protect women (...) from themselves,” (The Sound and the Fury 119) in the person of his sister Caddy.

The second problem of the post-war period was the myth of the black beast or the black rapist, who, with his uncontrollable sexuality, presented a constant threat for white Southern womanhood. Faulkner illustrates this segment of gender-race relations
in his *Light in August* (1932), where the relationship between Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden violates the taboo against miscegenation.

Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha is home of women of all ages, colors, and classes. Having been born and brought up in conservative, patriarchal, and traditional region Yoknapatawpha, women are either wives and mothers, or spinsters. When constructing the first category of women characters, wives and mothers, Faulkner used typical gender determinants of the patriarchal and traditional U. S. South which required of a Southerner to possess “money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family – incidentally of course, a wife.” (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* 263) As a wife/mother stereotype the Southern woman could not subvert or transgress gender defined boundaries.

The second category of Faulkner’s women characters are women who can develop and show their strength and identity only in absence of their fathers, brothers and husbands. She is too powerful for her small town community; her main offence is transgression of sex and gender codes and therefore she has to be silenced. The new, different, woman is presented in characters of Drusilla Hawk from – *Sartoris* (1929), is brave and loyal woman warrior who dressed and thought like a man during and after the war; Joanna Burden from *Light in August* (1932), is a woman who lived alone and ran her business like a man; Temple Drake from *Sanctuary* (1931) whose sexuality, when she was with Red, was gender transgressive because of its aggressiveness and lust uncharacteristic for the Southern concept of white womanhood. Unfortunately, each of these women characters ends up silenced by death or by a marriage vow. Only the characters of older women, like Miss Rosa Coldfield in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and Miss Habersham in Charles Dickens
Great Expectations who are old enough not to be the physical threat for the male patriarchal system, are allowed to show their individuality, strength, and determination and be emancipated when it does not endanger the system in which they live.

In 1861, a great war in American history began. It was a Civil War between the North and South that was by no means, Civil. This War would have great repercussions upon the economy of this country and the states within it. The American Civil War began with secession, creating a divided union of sorts and sparked an incredibly cataclysmic four years. It is widely regarded as the first great War of the industrial age and it has been widely understood as a war between an industrial power –the North and a largely pre industrial society, that of the South. The American Civil War is sometimes called the ‘War Between the States’. It is the most memorable war in the American history, three million fought and sixty thousand died. It was the only war fought on American soil amongst Americans. It was a long and bloody war. It split the United States apart at the seams, pitting former compatriots in a savage war to protect their beliefs and cultures. The South feared that the North would be soon able to use its influence to eliminate slavery and consequently the basis of the Southern way of life and thought that the North had sufficient advantage in both the Congress and the Senate. The North would emancipate the slaves and impose Northern ideals upon the Southern states.

Civil War in American history was the conflict between the Northern states (the union) and eleven Southern states that seceded from the Union and were organized as the Confederate States of America. “It was not a Civil War in the usual sense of opposing sides contending for control of one government. In the South the
Civil War is frequently called the ‘War Between the States.’ It is also known as the ‘War of the Rebellion’ and the ‘War of Succession’ (Americana 1-21). The Civil War was immensely costly in both lives and dollars. It left the South devastated. It also represented the victory of a strongly centralized federal government over the advocates of states’ rights brought about the abolition of slavery, and spurred American industrial development.

The American Civil War, from 1861-1865, marked as one of the permanent changes in American history and it has transformed the country economically, politically, socially and lead to the virtual reconstruction of a burgeoning nation. When the war increased the Northern prosperity, the South’s entire society consequently collapsed. The impact of the Civil War on Northern livelihood was a positive and encouraging one and profited immensely in the areas where the South could not obtain. The War resulted in the devastation of Southern economy and the advancement of the North.

The Civil War was largely a product of divergent economic organization between the North and the South of the United States. Revolving around ‘King Cotton’, the Southern economy relied upon slave labor to work on it’s vast plantations. From 1790 to 1860 some five lakhs slaves grew to four million, and in the same period, one thousand tons of cotton grew to one million. Slavery had become essential to the Southern way of life; agriculture was wholly depended upon and all available funds were used to perpetuate it, preventing development in other industries. The South's was a 'low capital' economy.

Many people’s lives were greatly affected after the Civil War. Some of the changes were good and some were bad. The Civil War era is one of the most serious
and interesting war in America’s history. The two different events that changed many lives of the people in the United States are slavery and African American art. The Civil War ripped families apart from each other. Men, as well as boys, were forced to fight to defend their sides. Many families were separated because of their beliefs on slavery. Loved ones were killed in the battle. Women, men, and children were forced to cope with the deaths of friends and the family. The Civil War, as other wars, was a time of depression that affected many people and families.

The loss of the Civil War completely altered the everyday life of the South. The institution of slavery crumbled, but many of its social values remained. It was a confusing time in which blacks were legally emancipated, but socially unequal to whites, still unable to pursue either an education or equal economic opportunities. Due to the loss of slavery as a business, as well as the rapid growth of industry and manufacture, the South lost its place as an economic influence on the nation. Agriculture, the staple product of Southern economy became significantly less lucrative. It became almost impossible for small family farms to continue functioning. Faulkner creates the Compson family to manifest the economic troubles of the South and their effects on the people of the region. The economic degeneration of the family worsens throughout the years, until Mr. Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* is eventually forced to sell his remaining land to fund his daughter Caddy's wedding and son Quentin's education.

The financial decline of the South had an enormous affect on the morale of the region. As a result of the many troubles that came with the South's loss of the Civil War, families were affected financially, psychologically and socially. As a result of this new sense of chaos, many families turned inward, becoming self-absorbed and
losing touch with reality and the rest of the world. The original aristocratic families of the South embodied traditional Southern values. Men were expected to act like courageous, chivalric, strong, gentlemen who defended the honor of their family name. Women were expected to be models of feminine virtue; possessing wholesomeness, refinement and virginity. Family values and faith in God were the groundwork for preserving these beliefs.

Faulkner’s novels can be viewed as a thorough examination of his preoccupation with deteriorating morality of the Post Civil War South. It appears as though Faulkner has found that the virtuous traditions of the old South have been replaced with a modern sense of helplessness and self-absorption. The characters of Quentin and Caddy seem to be unable to exist without the traditional values that they try so hard to reject. Benjy acts as a window into the subconscious mind of the family. He is completely preoccupied with his past, unable to deal with his new reality and shake off the memories of his sister. It is then left to Jason to maintain the honor of the Compson family, but his self-absorption and single-mindedness prevent him from doing so.

We come to the conclusion that Faulkner has successfully experimented his narrative techniques in Yoknapatawpha fiction. The agony, frustration, despair, chaos of the Civil War experienced by the people of the American South has been skillfully narrated by Faulkner through his characters. It has been made more meaningful and relevant by the use of his techniques. Hence, the Civil War has played a crucial role in making William Faulkner the master of narrative techniques. He owes much to the rich cultural heritage of the American South which also reflects the microcosm of the world as felt by him.
The following chapter reviews Faulkner’s delineation of characters, he makes them his mouth piece to reveal the inner working of the minds of the Compson brothers. It also reflects his creation of unforgettable powerful voices and brilliant insight into the psychological, economic and social realities of life in the South during the transition period from Civil War to the Modern Era.
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