CONCLUSION
mystery of tragic existence, occasionally reach a sense of nothingness; Hamlet finds man after all a 'quintessence of dust'. This does not happen with Faulkner's characters. Faulkner's Quentin who is overwhelmed by negative feelings which are directly related to Faulkner's experience of the South, does not go under in the final analysis. Quentin sharply reacts to his Harvard room-mate Shreve's question by exploding in the following words:

"I dont, I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!"

If Quentin with vehemence asserts that he does not hate the South, there is ample evidence to prove that Faulkner also has never viewed his home-land with contempt. But many of those who are intimately acquainted with his world argue to the effect that this world is morbid, ugly, sterile, strife-ridden and is in a process of disintegration, and is not conceived in love. They further maintain that his young men die young; his charming girls turn promiscuous; his parents suffer from a kind of emotional imbalance and can not guide their

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1 Absalom, Absalom, p. 378.
children properly, and consequently, they court disaster and doom; his priests are profane; his professionals have no faith in their profession, and those who work for the amelioration of the community and fight for its human values either prove ineffective or give up the fight. In this unshapely world heartless Volpones and gangsters live and thrive for a while but ultimately succumb to a crude and natural justice.

The world of Faulkner is the post-WWII world, stripped of all its primary moral concerns and obsessed with all sorts of abnormal fears. The economic stress and strain was so great that man had to barter his soul for ordinary concessions. The big houses of the region rapidly declined and the petty shop-keepers became the managers of great economic enterprises. Man forgot the old Gods and Saints, worshipped not only the 'Britannia of the market place' but the 'Saint Index' of the rising commercial houses. As a sensitive young man Faulkner intuitively grasped the meaning of the changing ethos and his major fiction took the form of an authentic human document portraying the sin and suffering of a people who sat once in the balconies and chatted with
their neighbours over a glass of imported wine. But the South which Faulkner anatomizes is not a purely physical reality. Though he very carefully and comprehensively presents its topography, it is to impress fully upon his reader that he speaks of a real people (and their real problems) who live in a specific region on the map. Faulkner faithfully describes the social condition of his region and charts the stirrings of the human heart in conflict with itself.

Now, the problem is, why should one set such a high value on this cheerless, morbid, moribund world where one finds neither profit nor delight nor the affirmation which can sustain life? Undoubtedly, Faulkner's world is like a dense evergreen forest, where easy penetration is almost impossible. But once one is determined to explore this dark unlit region, one finds an authentic record of a spiritual journey to a promised land. This world not only offers delight and instruction but a wide vision of life in all its tragic as well as benign aspects. In this world if one meets idiots, perverts and criminals one also meets stoics, intellectuals and saviours of humanity. In this world the Dilseys endure because they intuitively know the
basic troubles of the Compsons. Gail Hightower condemns and accepts the community at last because his suffering and humanity know no bounds. There are several others who silently work for the regeneration of man and the community.

Certainly one is fascinated by these characters and their 'Greek fate'. But this is not the main aspect of Faulkner's writing. Faulkner is essentially a farmer and a defender of the agrarian order. Those who maintain that he is a farmer by proxy fail to grasp the secret of his stance. He is a farmer because of his deep commitment to a system of values which only an agrarian order nourishes. But paradoxically the votary of this order always shows a kind of ambivalence in his attitude towards the basic moral concerns.

It is often maintained that Faulkner hates his region as certainly as Quentin hates it. But this hatred is nothing but one side of a complex love-hate relationship. Hence, the word 'love' or 'hate' does not by itself adequately express his ambivalent attitude towards his home-land. Perhaps 'understanding' and 'sympathy' would better describe Faulkner's attitude to his region. He
fully knows his people, their society, economic and religious institutions and more than anything else those historical and moral imperatives which blindly shape the tragic destiny of his proud countrymen. Hence, with honesty and frankness he depicts the total situation of the region - its dreams and frustrations, which critics use against him to brand him as a nihilist.

On the contrary Faulkner became conscious of the two value-systems that governed the people of his region at a very early stage in his life. The systems are represented by the Sartorisises and the Snopeses. If the Sartorisises represent the Cavalier order and its values, the Snopeses represent the new heartless economic dispensation with its despicable ideals. In a way, one can classify the bulk of Faulkner's work into two broad divisions - works dealing with the Sartoris morality and those dealing with the Snopeses morality. There are novels which project either the value system of the Sartorisises or that of the Snopeses.! But the whole corpus is informed with these basic value systems. One can interpret the whole of Faulkner's world in terms of a confrontation between these two value systems. And his Nobel speech succinctly expresses this latent theme.
Faulkner is essentially a novelist of human values and the conflict between the Sartorises and Snopeses represent the conflict between the human values of the old South and the commercial values of the new South.

A serious charge levelled against Faulkner is that he looks backward and pines for the ante-bellum days when men led a more integrated and richer life. To a certain extent this is understandable. From his works it becomes evident that the past always had a fascination for Faulkner. Yet Faulkner was never unmindful of its limitations. Throughout this study it has been upheld that he was extremely conscious of the failings of the heroic order. If Sutpen's character captures his imagination and his tragic lot wins his sympathy, he hardly fails to notice his weaknesses. He very honestly shows that Sutpen does not know love and that he accepts marriage as an instrument to augment the area of his personal influence. It is aptly remarked about him that he had forgotten the infinite; he never knew it. His downfall is a reminder of whatever is grave and constant in human suffering, but there is nothing secret about its cause. His fall like Agamemnon's was
moral not tragic. He is feared by the people but never liked by them. Unconcerned with deeper human issues, he builds an order based on those dubious principles of ethics which ultimately prove fatal to the order. Consequently, the order collapses because it is not built on the rock of goodwill and faith. If the Sutpen legend does not fully express the basic Southern predicament, he writes about Ike's repudiation to vindicate his stand. Through Sutpen and Ike, Faulkner wants to affirm that heroism and humility are not enough separately to change the harrowing lot of his people. As Nietzsche asserts that for the revival of the world we need Caesar's courage and Christ's innocence, so Faulkner states that for the resurgence of the South we need Sutpen's courage and Ike's humanity. If Sutpen is imperfect, Ike is in no way the paragon of perfection. Lawrence Thompson writes:

That is, he repudiates his claim to the ownership of the McCaslin plantation. His motives are clear. He thus intends to set himself free from all the evils and injustices and bondages which he feels, have cursed and continue to curse his legal inheritance. But in retrospect, Isaac himself admits that his noble and idealistic gesture of repudiation had
been a tragic error. In various ways it had ruined his life to such an extent that he might almost say with Cordelia, "we are not the first who, with best meaning, have incurred the worst".

The order which the Sartorises, the Sutpens and the Composens founded in the deep South was really heroic and in certain respects praiseworthy. It cherished virtues like pride, courage, honour, humility, charity and pity. Faulkner openly praised these values and often talked about them in public, both at home and abroad. But this moral order of the South could not last long because it encouraged chattel slavery, which denied the concept of universal brotherhood and encouraged segregation. Faulkner's major fiction dramatizes the conflict between the planter's will to dominate and his own ideal to achieve tranquillity. He is undoubtedly, an avowed advocate of the heroic ideals of the ante-bellum South, but he cannot bless those lethal instruments of coercion which favour perpetration of slavery and segregation in the South.

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The second system of values which figures in the works of Faulkner relates to the materialism represented by Mem and his kinmen. This system is purely mechanical; it encourages exploitation and a senseless accumulation of wealth to tighten its grip over social institutions and thus to cripple the collective will of the people. Stiff, expressionless, unappeasable and accurate, Mem stands for this inhuman order which threatens the human impulse and is unsound, because if the old order encouraged slavery, segregation, crude sexuality and indifference to human dignity, this order persistently worked against the concept of community and human brotherhood. Faulkner expresses his animus against Mem and through him ruthlessly attacks the industrial plutocracy of the new South and its alliance with the amoral forces, and perhaps more than that, the growing undiluted inhumanity of his people.

Critics fail to account for the difference between the old order as represented by Sutpen and the new one represented by Mem. Superficially there is no difference. Both of them are over-reachers, in a sense, heartless monomaniacs and work for the destruction
of what they create. But there is a difference and an important one too. Faulkner seems to imply that if Sutpen is not an aristocrat by birth, he is one by design. With a little modification this qualification can be applied to Flem also. But the real difference is, whereas Flem worked against all the traditional mores of the bucolic community, Sutpen remained faithful to the heroic ideals of the ante-bellum South. In a sense his career shows that he is both the pride and shame of his home-land. J.G. Watson writes about these two representative figures:

Like Flem, Sutpen rises from poverty to wealth largely by his ability to use people for his own purposes; yet Faulkner endowed him with a capacity for heroic vision that he expunged from his portrait of Flem. In Sutpen's grand design, the acquisition of money is incidental to establishing his own dynasty and avenging himself upon the aristocracy of the ante-bellum South. To Flem, money is everything. In him, Sutpen's ambition manifests itself as animal appetite, Sutpen's imagination, as craft, and Sutpen's industry, as intrigue. The baseness of his design mirrors his unresponsiveness to human imperatives and deprives him of human dimension.

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Essentially, Faulkner is a novelist of human values and dramatizes in his Yoknapatawpha county novels the clash of two value systems represented by the Sartorises and the Snopeses. If he occasionally recommends, with hesitation, the ante-bellum values to mankind, he also makes his reader conscious of its failure on the human front. But when he attacks the values of the new South represented by Hlem he becomes merciless and this sometimes even brutalizes his writing. George Marion O'Donnell very precisely writes about his value systems:

In Mr. Faulkner's mythology there are two kinds of characters; they are Sartorises or Snopeses whatever the family names may be. And in the spiritual geography of Mr. Faulkner's work these are two worlds: the Sartoris world and the Snopes world. In all of his successful works, he is exploring the two worlds in detail, dramatizing the inevitable conflict between them.

It is a universal conflict. The Sartorises act traditionally; that is to say, they act always with an ethically responsible will. They represent vital morality, humanism. Being anti-traditional, the Snopeses are immoral from the Sartoris point of view. But the Snopeses do not recognize this point of view; acting only for self-interest; they acknowledge no ethical duty. Really, then, they are
amoral; they represent naturalism or animalism. And the Sartoris-Snopes conflict is fundamentally a struggle between humanism and naturalism.4

In addition to the Sartorises and the Snopeses, the poor-whites form a permanent part of the Faulknerian landscape. They lead a hard and simple life. They are needy, mean, violent, graceless, sexually abominable. But nonetheless, they are the real sons of the soil and pay homage to all the traditional values and obligations of the South. They go to the church, listen to their preacher with rapt attention, fear God and obey all His commandments, but throw to the wind all moral pretensions when their ego is hurt or when they are provoked. Anse of *As I Lay Dying* is one such poor-white. He is simple, crude, crafty but faithful. Through him Faulkner expresses some of the cardinal virtues of the agrarian South.

Another controversial problem which Faulkner explores in all seriousness is the racial problem of

the South. He views this problem with deep concern and tries to comprehend it in all its ramifications. With him the problem becomes purely a human problem, one involving the acceptance of a cruel fact—the presence of the negro on the Southern landscape. It is a problem for which the mind offers solutions the heart rejects. The real issue is how to accept not only a people, but a whole set of mental and moral attitudes by a people, of a people, who are at least apparently on a much lower cultural rung. If one presses Faulkner to commit himself on the issue one will realize that he maintains that the problem is one of emotional integration and of cultural synthesis. And integration and synthesis need time and prove painful. In the meantime, people have to live with all those wrongs which chattel slavery, segregation and bi-racial living breed in a region.

But there are commentators who contend that Faulkner is not only a nigger-hater but a staunch segregationist, that he tirelessly works to establish the white supremacy in the South. They totally reject Faulkner's view that the negro is the cause
of the tragedy of his homeland. On the contrary they hold that the negro is the consequence and the worst sufferer in a society suffering from the segregationist dilemma. But a careful study of his works reveals that in the final analysis Faulkner emerges as a humanist and recognizes all the claims of suffering humanity, both black and white. His portrait of Dilsey is drawn with such understanding and sympathy that it could convince any one that Faulkner was not a segregationist.

Faulkner shows a typical Southern orthodoxy in his treatment of sex and marital love. He admits that sex is not only a dark energy which seeks a healthy outlet, but one which needs a proper conduit for its uninterrupted flow. Once this urge takes an unspecified direction, it creates havoc in the life of an individual and the community. He expresses his primitive wrath when he finds that parents fail to regulate this energy in a growing child. He not only condemns cheap and free sex, but any form of sex which is irresponsible and uncreative. His girls become promiscuous, not because they are strong and beautiful, but because their mothers have failed to impart to them proper sex education and
inculcate in them the necessary fear and pride which maturing sex demands. He condemns Mrs. Compson’s morbid sensibility and Mrs. Varnor’s ridiculous indifference. He never views sex either as a calamity or as pure fun. The importance which Faulkner attaches to sex makes him apparently a Freudian. But Faulkner is a Christian moralist and believes that there is a direct connection between the sexual morality and morality in general. And a society which grows slack morally, disintegrates. He emphasizes this aspect of the problem almost in all the novels of the Yoknapatawpha county and tries to relate this theme with his major themes of degradation and fall.

There is again Faulkner’s treatment of marital love which puzzles his readers. In his novels marriage rarely succeeds. One can not say for certain what the psychological reason for this attitude is. Even Joseph Blotner’s definitive biography has no light to throw on the problem. One can only guess that perhaps Faulkner’s early disappointment in love has a connection with this kind of treatment. However, one thing which is certain is that he sees a link between sexual aberration of any kind and moral failure, and always takes a serious note of the moral lapses of its people.
Michael Millgate justly sums up Faulkner's preoccupations:

His deep identification with his own region is one of his greatest strengths, especially as it emerges in the marvellous sense of place, whether it be the heart of the wilderness or the interior of Miss Reba's brothel, and in the rich evocation of the world of Yoknapatawpha county; and certainly the intensity of his tragic power in novels such as *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, derives both from this profoundly localized sense of social reality and from a poignant awareness of the proud and shameful history of the courageous, careless, gallant and oppressive South. At the same time, to concentrate too exclusively on this aspect of his work is to be in danger of mistaking means for ends and of seeing Faulkner as a lesser figure than he really is. The solidity of Faulkner's provinciality provides the unshakable foundation for his immensely ambitious exploration of the fundamental human themes with which he is always primarily concerned, and the examples of Hardy and Emily Bronte may suggest that Faulkner is not alone among the novelists in pursuing the universal in terms of the intensely local.\(^5\)

Faulkner, Michael Millgate implies, not only transforms the local context into an archetypal human condition; his main concern is primarily with the human

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values. Consequently, he exploits local contexts to reveal the permanent sources of human values which sustain and support the human order. And to stress this point it is not necessary to quote his Nobel speech at length. If a story enacts the significance, Faulkner is the novelist of great significance. His genius moves with felicity in the realms of tragedy and comedy and creates myths and legends and endows them with a meaning which compels men to think. If Lear on the heath is a memorable sight, High tower in his old secluded house is equally unforgettable. Certainly, his genius has all the force of a great creator, and his imagination has the sweep of a falcon. Blake defined energy as exuberance. Faulkner does not possess less creative energy than any other great novelist, and one can hardly imagine a region which has found a more inspired singer of its glory and shame than that of Faulkner.

The Wessex with its heaths, pre-historic stonehenge, villages, valleys, peasant folks, dairy maids, grass-cutters, shepherds, reedlemen and unlettered damsels inspires Hardy to create its saga, and out of
this common stuff Hardy creates a human drama which expresses the misgivings, strivings and desperations of all mankind. Faulkner with a county in Mississippi, with its ravaged towns, abandoned Civil War houses, decaying plantation mansions, cursed aristocrats and repressed humanity creates its legend which bodies forth the dreams and fears of a people who represent the suffering humanity. Both Hardy and Faulkner use a limited human context to reveal all those imperatives and values which form the bed-rock of human existence. In this respect they resemble the Greeks who from the vantage point of a locality explore the turbid incongruity at the heart of things. Perhaps because of his historical situation Faulkner understands the human predicament in its more variegated forms and expresses his real concerns with the help of the over-reachers and the under-privileged and achieves a fictional veracity which one can find only in the works of a giant like Homer.