The problem of isolation has acquired large dimensions in the present times. Although the feeling of isolation in mankind is age-old and world-wide, and has been echoed in the literature of all times, its effects have never been felt so deeply as in the present century. Winifred Dusenbury considers it a "disease of the soul." According to him, isolation today has acquired the same deadly dimensions as cancer, thrombosis or leukemia; as such, there are suggestions that it should feature permanently in the medical encyclopedias and be given as much attention as physical ailments. Scholars, all over the world, have tried to define this malady but their efforts have been more descriptive than definitive. Their probe has resulted in the description of the causes and manifestations of isolation. David Riesman, the sociologist, for example, considers isolation to be a "recent phenomenon." He attributes it to the rapid industrialization of society in which each man lacking in self-sufficiency fears that he would be ridiculed if he is different from the crowd, hence he spends all his will and energy in his efforts to conform to the social norms. In this process he not only gets separated from himself but also from the crowd which is as lonely as he, and with whom his communication is
no deeper than the surface level. Psychologists have attributed the causes of isolation to parental failure, personal weakness, unhappy family, jilted love, the conflicts between the material and spiritual forces in man, and a real or a fancied defect in one's self or an unfavourable self-comparison. Literary men, all over the world, have also given vent to their acute sense of isolation. Their feeling is echoed with the same intensity irrespective of its genre. Whether a Sartre, a Becket, an Eliot or a Baldwin, his works echo the same sad note of human isolation.

(II)

In America the feeling of isolation is more pronounced than in any other part of the world. It is a part of American character which a perceptive visitor from abroad does not miss to observe. It seems to him as if the American is transplanted from the homeland, unattached to the soil, and is distrustful of authority. He seems a perpetual wanderer who moves constantly in search of new pastures. Therefore, one of the most persistent themes in the American literature is that of a loss of tradition and hence, a lack of home. In the mobile society of business and risk, fortunes rise and fall regularly, and as much, man rises and falls accordingly into a better or cheaper environment. In other words, the American can find in his environment no confirmation of his identity. He cannot say as the European
'I am I, because my fellow citizens know me'. The feeling is one of the homelessness of the soul, of being an isolate in the place wherein one has a right to belong.

The earliest manifestations of this aspect of the American life are found in the works of Cooper, Twain and Willa Cather. They mark the isolation of the Frontier. Similarly, the post-World War writers such as Eliot, Anderson and Hemingway who chose to call themselves the "Lost Generation" reflected their self-imposed isolation from society and their disillusionment with the spiritually barren world. In the present times Bernard Malamud, James Baldwin, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, John Updike and many others are writing about the same spiritual malady of the age.

(III)

The South, till the turn of the century, had been basically an uncomplex, unvaried and unchanging place. Always simple in its culture, always inclined to lag, and forever complacent about its socio-economic organizations, it had never felt the need for self analysis. But with the defeat in the Civil War the South was rudely shaken out of its deep slumber and made to face reality. What followed was a long, unsuccessful struggle to hold on to the vanishing patterns of life. Therefore, in order to understand the Southern isolation, one must see it in the
context of its defeat in the Civil War, from the realization of which it has never really recovered. The uneasiness has been manifested frequently in the form of guilt, self-justification, rage or depression. There is often the gnawing and burning sense of shame about slavery which makes the Southerner feel guilty in the eyes of God and in the eyes of man. George Tindal, for example, writes, "How impossible it must be for an owner of slaves to win his way into heaven." And Thomas Jefferson, himself a slave-holder, says, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is Just. That His justice cannot sleep for ever." The southerner is conscious that the world hates him for the injustice done by him to his fellow-men, and he hates back in return. His is a rage born out of helplessness, indignation and loss. Eudora Welty, in "Must the Novelist Crusade?" writes, "There have already been giant events, some of them wrenchingly painful and humiliating. And now there is the added atmosphere of hate. We in the South are a hated people these days; we were hated first for actual and particular reasons, and now we may be hated still more in some vast unparticularized way. I believe there must be such a thing as sentimental hate. Our people hate back .... This hate seems in part shame for self, in part self-justification, in part panic that life is really changing." 

It takes long to re-adjust the mental frame-work after a sudden, rude upheaval. The old order is dead, and so are the values that went with it. A close parent-child relationship,
a joint-family system in which the old and the disabled were protected; a closely-knit community in which woman was respected and man's motto was honour and chivalry, are things of the past. Its place is taken by disjointed, unrelated atoms called individuals who clutch what they can get and cry, "Mine"! The change is discerned in the experience of poverty and stagnation in a region which was otherwise rich and progressing. With the break-up of the old social structure the agrarian economy has given way to industrial and technical economy and large-scale production has been replaced by large-scale employment in factories and offices. There is an exodus from the country to the Metropolitan city. In this process the thing that is lost is human relationship. The sensitive Southern mind is filled with despair. The naive Southerner turns back his nostalgic gaze into the era of peace and plenty, when the blacks and whites, rich and poor, illiterate and the educated lived in harmony with each other. He shudders at the invasion of vulgarity and justifies the past in the eyes of the world. The school of Thomas Nelson Page depicts the good and gracious life of the Southern aristocracy and the kindly treatment meted out to the slaves. But this lop-sided attitude cuts off the Southerner from reality. The argument of this school is built on fantasy rather than on fact. It is not surprising, therefore, that the writer who sentimentalizes and romanticizes a thing which is not, feels like a fugitive in his own surroundings. It was in the late 1920s that John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Donald Davidson initiated a group of
thinkers who under a joint declaration asserted the validity of the legend of the Old South in *I'll Take My Stand*. They were, in the words of Cash, the "spiritual heirs of Thomas Nelson Page." Even though the validity of the Page-school is no longer present in the modern South, practically all the prominent Southern writers of today voice their love for the past. The result is a profusion of myth, fantasy, history and legend in their works.

To the other school belong those new writers who show an awakening to the realities of life, complete with an angry out-burst at the race-discrimination and an appreciation for the liberal and democratic principles. They are aware of the inevitability of industrialism and the corollaries that follow it. They welcome the technical, economic and intellectual progress of the modern era, but are also conscious of the isolation that has appeared as result of the fragmentation of the old order.

(IV)

Discussed below are some of the major writers of the Southern Renaissance who with their realistic approach toward the changing world have presented the social patterns with all their virtues and drawbacks. Realism is their hallmark.
William Faulker, while giving a realistic picture of the South, turns a hostile gaze upon the modern times. His characters are mainly divided into two classes: the decaying aristocrats, represented by the Sartorises; and the uncouth vulgar commoners, represented by the Snopeses. He attacks the modern ethos which hails the business civilization as against the traditional pastoral or agrarian way. Faulkner regards the new civilization as "dehumanized, impersonal, non-productive and unprincipled." However, his truthful portrayal of the New South invited a great deal of retribution from the people. There was bitter resentment against him and his contemporaries like Thomas Wolfe and Erskine Caldwell on the ground that they misrepresented the South with malicious intent. That his genius as a writer was later accepted and honoured is a different story. His characters whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, are often wretched in a crowded miserable world.

Caroline Gordon depicts two major themes in her fiction: the death of the South and the spiritual corruption that is inherent in the metropolis. She decries the death of the authentic southern woman who either lives in the past which she cannot make vital in the present or she suffers the frustration of her love and must therefore endure the emptiness of a life unfulfilled. Her Southerner who tries to recreate the traditional way of life by imposing upon it the tastes and values of a money culture is often only a synthetic Southerner.
And the one who tries to live purely by the agrarian way is a misfit in the modern society. On the other hand, the metropolis is a place where the souls are uprooted. Here adultery is taken lightly and one enters upon it out of sheer boredom. Men have lost their direction of lives. Gordon's too is a world of uprooted isolated people.

R.P. Warren wages a war against liberalism, science and industrialism. Science, according to him, is responsible for the God-abandoned world of today. He rejects metropolitanism of the 20th century which stifles the human personality and cuts him from the past. His *Night Rider* tells about how a man becomes a victim of disintegration and isolation when he does not know who he is. Man's goal, according to Warren, must be to know himself. Behind the visibly political frame-work of his best work *All the King's Men*, Warren shows that man's way to self-knowledge is hard, not simply because truth is illusive but because the society is made up of men who are victims of their own self divisions.

Truman Capote presents a world of terror, defeat and loneliness. Every one in this world is a cripple, a physical, mental or emotional defective. His people yearn to find fulfillment in love. They wish to open the channels of spirit and flow toward each other in heart-felt communion. All the major works of Capote — *Other Voices, Other Rooms, A Night Tree, The Grass Harp* — show a concern about a decadent culture, a picture of stark loneliness and search for love and identity.
Carson McCullers is preoccupied with the variations on the theme of spiritual isolation in all her works. The paradoxes of loneliness and love compell her characters to a wretched abandonment of hope and leave them to feed on pain and frustrated communion. She is possessed by the unceasing failures in the consummation of love, because the lover is always rejected by the beloved, who would himself be a lover. The lover, thus, goes on dying into infinity, his spiritual death.

We have seen in all the writers, briefly discussed above, certain common features. They all depict a nostalgic concern for the decaying values of the past; an apprehension about the modern mechanized life that is replacing it; a sense of isolation born out of the breaking up of the traditional patterns; an endeavour to establish communication with others and to create lasting ties of love. Of course, the imprint of each writer's individual perception makes his writing uniquely his own.

(V)

Eudora Welty is one of the most distinguished Southern writers of today. Born on April 13, 1909, in Jackson, Mississippi, she has spent all her life in that place except those few years during which she studied at the University of Wisconsin for an A.B. degree, and at Columbia for courses in advertising. Her father, Christian Webb Welty, was from
Ohio, and mother, Mary Chestina Andrew Welty from West Virginia. So she is not a Southerner in the strictest sense of the term. But having lived all her life in a place of her choice she is "as southern as Mississippi soil itself." Her peculiar position as a "second generation southerner" has given her a sense of perspective and of detachment about the place, which prove valuable to her as an artist.

Miss Welty's career as a writer began in 1936 with the publication of "The Death of a Traveling Salesman" in a magazine called "Manuscript". Since then there has been no looking back for her. Her stories have appeared in all the leading journals of the country, ranging from the "Southern Review" to "New Yorker", and have been collected in four volumes, namely, *A Curtain of Green* (1941), *The Wide Net* (1943), *The Golden Apples* (1949) and *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (1955). She has also published five novels: *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), *Delta Wedding* (1946), *The Ponder Heart* (1954), *Losing Battles* (1970) and *The Optimists' Daughter* (1972). In addition to her fiction she has written numerous pieces on criticism, which appeared in collected *Three Papers on Fiction* (1962) and *The Eye of the Story* (1977). Her *The Shoe Bird* (1964) is a children's story and *One Time, One Place* (1971) a snapshot album with an introductory essay. Many honours have come to her, among them are first two prizes in the O.Henry Memorial Contest, a Guggenheim Fellowship,
election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the William Dean Medal of the Academy of Arts and Letters, appointment as Honorary Consultant of the Library of Congress and honorary degrees from the University of the South (of Sewanee), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Washington University (St. Louis), Yale University and Harvard University. Her novel *The Optimist's Daughter* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1972.

Despite the range of her work, Miss Welty is often associated with William Faulkner, the senior Mississippian, who also drew his material from the same region. Scholars have tried to trace the influence, if any, of the towering personality that stood like a big mountain, that had taken up the whole region into its folds. In fact he had portrayed the modern South so completely in the main outline, that one of the major problems before Eudora Welty, when she started writing fiction was, "how to avoid re-writing Faulkner." She solved the problem remarkably by picking up the more delicate issues of the human mind and studying them in depth rather than breadth. Faulkner's world is inhabited by people who despite their struggles and sufferings cannot be comprehended apart from the context of the class to which they belong. There are mainly two classes in his fiction: the Sartoris, who represent the dying aristocratic order, and the Snopeses, the vulgarians who are replacing them. Faulkner's characters are larger than life, their sufferings of a great magnitude,
they are often wretched, but seldom lonely. Here lay Eudora Welty's opportunity. She picked up her men and women immediately at hand and wandered into the interiors of their psyche. Like Jane Austen who created her masterpieces, like that artist who draws his soul upon a little piece of ivory, Eudora Welty writes about the ordinary people of the small town engaged in their ordinary pursuits of life. She says: "At all times I'm interested in individuals, as you may have gathered, and in personal relationships which are to me the things that matter more than any kind of generalizations about the world at large."

What she finds is the inevitable isolation in each heart, the incessant pursuit to find communication, and the repeated failure to achieve total reciprocity due to the impregnable privacy of each heart. The answer to one's inevitable isolation, according to her, is love which manifests itself in a myriad forms in different people at different times. Love strikes an affirming note to an otherwise empty human existence.

This thesis aims to study the patterns of love and isolation as they appear in the fiction of Eudora Welty.

(VI)

The thesis is divided into five major chapters:

ISOLATION: Although it is not right to categorize human beings and label them, because each individual is a separate entity and reacts to his circumstances in his own unique way, yet for
the sake of convenience the isolated characters of Miss Welty have been divided into three broad categories: those on whom isolation is imposed, those who seek isolation and, those who are isolated from the world due to their superior insight into human truth.

**LOVE:** Although Miss Welty presents a set of characters who are haunted by a constant sense of isolation, her novels do not end on a note of despair. Love offers an affirming faith in the dark despairing world of negation. Love makes kaleidoscopic patterns in Eudora Welty's fiction. These are studied under four broad headlines: Parental love, Marital love, Familial love, and Social love. An attempt will also be made to study Miss Welty's attitude toward sex in her man-woman relationships.

**THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER:** This novella, in my opinion, is Eudora Welty's best. Artistically, stylistically and philosophically it stands as the epitome of excellence. An attempt is made in this chapter to study the different patterns of love and isolation as they run through the rich texture of this work.

**STYLE AND TECHNIQUE:** Miss Welty is one of the few writers who has written extensively about her own craft. "The Eye of the Story", "Mist the Novelist Crusade", "How I Write", "Place in Fiction" are some of the full length essays in which she discusses her methodology. Her prose style is studied under different headings and it has been shown how each stylistic
device is used to depict the theme of isolation and love. The headings broadly are: (a) The use of Southern oral tradition; (b) Use of Myth, folk-lore and legend; (c) Use of symbolism, fantasy and grotesque; (d) Use of techniques, such as the snapshot technique, the internal monologue and the stream of consciousness.

VISION: An attempt will be made to study the development of her vision about life, love and isolation.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


7. Ibid., p.384.


