Conclusion

Critical opinion, especially when it is over-loaded with moral, social, philosophical or political consideration, often takes a writer's works as its starting point and then goes off spinning theories based more on the predilection of the critic than on the works of the writer. This happened to Faulkner also when his novels appeared in late twenties and early thirties. The literary climate of the time was dominated by neo-naturalist and "leftist" ideas. The economic boom, followed by the crash and the emergence of fascism and bolshevism made many a writer and critic focus his attention on the social and political relevance of literature. Any writer who did not pay attention to contemporary issues and indulge in prescriptive or expository writing was considered to be reactionary, retrogressive and even fascist. Faulkner's works appeared to be not only totally irrelevant to the context of those times but also opposed to it. He seemed to be interested in glorifying the planter dominated past of the South, in eulogizing submissiveness on the part of blacks and in depicting his times as degenerate and lack-luster. In short, he was considered to be opposed
Though the critical opinion has changed since then, and Faulkner has become entrenched in the annals of American literature as a significant writer, yet the impression persists that he is unconcerned with the process of change. He appears to be preoccupied with a kind of perennial religious and moral virtues, which were valued in the past but are ignored in modern times making life meaningless. The general opinion seems to agree with Sartre's that future does not seem to exist for Faulkner as he considers the present a dead end. An equally popular view is his novels are myths representing the struggle between the superior world of traditionalists - represented by Sartorises and the inferior world of antitraditionalists -- represented by Snopeses.

However, when we apply these axioms to Faulkner's novels, we come across baffling results. For example, there is the perplexed statement by George Marion O'Donnell:

But in Light in August the proportionate dramatic content of the characters is the reverse of the norm set up by the other books, and there is a corollary confusion of the whole scheme of traditional values. The Sartoris characters, like Hightower, are vague or typical;
of Christmas became the protagonist, the Snopes world, with its total lack of values, seems to have supplanted the Sartoris values within the artist himself, although against his will.

The last phrase 'although against his will' reveals very clearly that it is difficult to find a place for the theme and characters of *Light in August* within the framework of a theory of conflict between the traditionalists and anti-traditionalists without providing an unsubstantiated and subjective explanation for the novelists' attitude. Moreover, such an interpretation does not account for Faulkner's attitude towards slavery, racial discrimination, treatment of women and miscegenation. He may have felt that given time the South would have solved the problem of slavery and discrimination against the blacks on its own, but he does not in anyway share the Southern values regarding these issues. And if Faulkner were completely indifferent to contemporary issues, he could not have provided a portrait of a storm-trooper, albeit unconsciously, in the character of Percy Grimm or of a fascist in making

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in the character of Hightower. The study of his five major novels undertaken in depth for the purpose of investigating his attitude towards change shows that Faulkner is not at all averse to change nor is he too enamoured of the past. He as a matter of fact, feels that if a community becomes static, it is likely to develop a negative approach to life and decay; but he does not consider all change to be necessarily good. In a static society forced change can lead to further deterioration and corruption. To be effectively useful in the advancement of human civilization, change in material circumstances should be accompanied by change in attitudes and the social and individual values. If this message does not get through easily, it is because of the material out of which Faulkner's novels have been carved. Not withstanding the universal appeal of his novels, Faulkner looked at change in the perspective of the South, and the Southern perspective was not only different from that of Europe after the First World War, but also from that of the rest of America.

The two events that had far reaching effects on the American society since the Revolution were the Civil War and the First World War. The Civil War made the American society more cohesive and confirmed the federal
nature of the United States of America once for all.
The First World War shook the moral foundation of the
Western civilization, of which America considered itself
a part. In Europe and America both, the younger genera-
tion looked askance at the values it had taken for
granted and looked around for a change. In America the
problem became a little more complex. The period of war
and its immediate aftermath in the twenties was of
economic boom, which seemed to impart uncontrollable
dynamicity to the entire society. Nearly 50 percent of
American population became concentrated in cities giving
rise to new social and political tensions. The subsequent depression in the thirties caused large scale
frustration and misery and provided an impetus to more
radical economic and political movements. It gave way
to the New Deal providing a brand new American concept
of capitalism with a human face. The main issues in
America in the post-World War I era were those of find-
ing solutions to its economic and social problems and
its political footings in the changed international
scenario. Added to it, in the cultural field, was the
soul searching restlessness of repatriates and war
veterans, and the impact of Marxian and Freudian ideas.
The South also experienced the shock of World War I, but it was manifested in a different way. As in the North, a great many changes had taken place since the Civil War, the acceleration of change was merely a matter of degree; in the South it brought about an intense shocking realization of the incompleteness of the change that should have taken place in the post-Civil War period. The problem in the South, therefore, was of complete transformation, and major issues were mostly the same as were in the aftermath of Civil War.

The Civil War had been fought on the issue of slavery; but the abolition of slavery was not the only issue behind it. It was indeed a clash of two opposed ways of life. The Southern economy was basically agrarian economy based on slave labour, and the Southern society, like any agrarian society, was smugly conservative and easy going. Life moved at a slow, elegant pace. The major cause of the Civil War was the Southerners' desire to maintain their separate identity and sense of the superiority of their way of life over the industrially and commercially inclined North with a hectic pace of life. As the issue hotted up, the South invented myths to make its way of life look better and more glamorous than the North's way of life. In its
own imagination it became populated with aristocratic, chivalrous and refined gentlemen and refined sensitive and virtuous ladies. The defeat in the Civil War accentuated the tendency for myth making as a kind of compensatory mechanism to overcome the sense of humiliation.

The past of the South was romanticized, it was conceived as an Eden of innocence, whose purity was destroyed by the Northern intruder. In their desire to maintain a semblance of their old life style, the Southerners resisted all change. The North, after the political aim of subduing resistance to the Federal authority was achieved, left the South very much to itself. If anything, the rapaciousness of carpet-baggers only strengthened the feeling of moral superiority in the Southerner and further alienated him from the North. Progress meant to him shameful capitulation to gross material instinct. As a result, the post-World War I era found the South economically backward, with decaying plantations, outmoded attitude towards women, and strong prejudices against the Negroes. The Negro became a scapegoat for all the ills of the South, and while white women were treated as spiritual beings, devoid of natural instincts and any volition of their own, black women were considered mere objects of lust. The insistence
upon keeping the things as they were and self righteousness often led to acts gross injustice and in-human violence on the one hand and hypocrisy on the other. For, inspite of resistence, changes were taking place in and around the South, but even those who recognized the change and took advantage of it for their personal gains chose to go along with the popular prejudice. As a matter of fact, in comparison to such opportunists those who really believed in the past appeared to be more dignified and morally upright. They at least had some principles albeit misconceived.

It is out of this world that Faulkner has drawn the material for his novels. Life in Yoknapatawpha is fairly representative of the pattern of life in northern Mississippi, the region to which Faulkner belonged. There are the old planter families in a state of disin- tegration, small farmers, poor whites, the small town people of Jefferson and the Negores. The pace of life is slow and people are more concerned with the problems of their families and sorroundings than with the events taking place beyond the boundries of their country. When anything happens that is likely to affect the pattern of their life and their cherished views, they burst out into a spurt of violence. One thing which is
quite obvious is their preoccupation with the past. 
Sartoris is the only novel that makes a reference to the contemporary situation as it deals with the restlessness of a soldier returning from the war. But in it also, the compulsive drive that forces young Sartoris to embrace death knowingly is rooted in an obsession with the past.

Compelled by the nature of the material of his novels, Faulkner looks at change not from the standpoint of post-World War I world but from the standpoint of post-Civil War South. His concern is to find out why the South became stagnant and why changes there went awry. Such an approach involves looking from the past to the present not from the present to the future. And, since Faulkner finds the strangulating hold of the past to be mainly responsible for the ills of the South, his novels mostly deal either with the obsession with the past or its baneful effects.

The story of The Sound and the Fury revolves around a planter family unable to free itself of the hangover of the past. Mr. Compson and his wife unable to come to terms with the changes around them watch the disintegration of their family helplessly, one seeking
escape in the fumes of whiskey, the other in self-pity. Of their children, Caddy, the daughter tries to find satisfaction in sexual promiscuity, one of the sons, Quentin, is obsessed with the family honour and not being able to save it, has guilty delusions of incest, the other, Jason, in a kind of retaliationary anger, becomes sordidly materialistic and the third, Benjy, is a castrated imbecile who cannot comprehend the sequence of time. The inability of the family to meet the challenges of time leads to degeneration. Quentin, finding time the source of all trouble tries to stop it by committing suicide. Jason makes a compromise devoid of all moral responsibility because he does not realize that change in material circumstances also requires change in attitudes. His ill treatment of Caddy, who is forced to leave the house, and Caddy's daughter, who finally has to elope with his illgotten fortune, is an indicator that he is not ready to accept new ideas. To compensate himself for the lack of love in his family and sense of humiliation, he becomes villainously selfish, hard-hearted and attached to money.

As I Lay dying is a novel about the imposition of a dead person's (past's) will upon the living (present). The husband and the children of Addie carry her body to
bury at Jefferson, apparently with the intention of honouring her wish, but actually they all go to Jefferson on account of their selfish motives. Anse wants to have a set of dentures and a new wife; Jewel does not want her to be buried away close the Bundrens; Cash feels a kind of loyalty to Jewel and the rest of the family; Vardaman is incapable of understanding fully its import; and Dewey Dell is anxious to get medicine to terminate her pregnancy. The only person who realizes that it is wrong to carry about a stinking corpse is Darl, who failing to stop it, finally breaks down to be confined to a mental asylam by the rest of Bundrens.

Sanctuary is about the miscarriage of justice and lack of humanity in a tradition bound society. One of the central motifs in the novel is the desire for change. Benbow feels that either Jefferson should change or he should go to Europe for a change. He finds the Jefferson society so blinded by its prejudices that it does not hesitate to indulge in deliberate acts of cruelty, perjury and injustice. Benbow's efforts to secure justice for Goodwin and provide shelter to Ruby and her child are put to nought by Narcissa, his witch-hunting sister, Judge Drake, ignoring the requirements of justice to maintain the illusion of his daughter's
delicate temperament and innocence, and a jury predetermined about its decision. The combination of these traditionalist forces encourages the mob to lit a human bonfire, which repulses and depresses Benbow so much that he gives up all hope of change either for himself or for Jefferson and slinks back to his old life from which he had tried to escape.

Light in August deals with the prejudices inherited from the past which dehumanize human soul and create a maze of emotions that makes it impossible to get out of the bondage of the past. Joe Christmas is a victim of a community which harbours religious and racial fanaticism, both. The impact of this fanaticism throughout his childhood, and cruelty at the hands of those who should have provided him security and love, leaves him confused about his identity and seething with anger. To assert his self, he commits two murders and is finally himself murdered in a most gruesome manner by a fanatical mob. Joe could have escaped but he is psychologically so trapped that he has to come back to Jefferson again and again because he wants to find a place in the community which had obliterated his identity. Faulkner makes his sympathies obvious by investing Joe with resemblances to Christ, so much so that his lynching
looks like crucifixion. Inspite of being violent, agressive and individualistic, he is the prey not the predator. The traditional pharisaical morality and racial attitudes of Jefferson community are responsible for its brutalization and Joe's psychopathic behaviour.

The myth of South's chivalric past and innocence gets exploded in *Absalom, Absalom!* Sutpen, as a legendary planter fascinates Quentin. No matter how his story is reconstructed by the various characters certain facts about his life stand out. He, no doubt, possesses enormous energy which enables him to carve a plantation out of wilderness and makes him a dashing figure that dominates his surroundings in war and peace, but his actions and attitudes make him appear as more of the demon that Rosa Coldfield considers him to be than a cultured, morally upright, chivalrous and paternalistic planter. Jefferson society appears in this novel not as a nurturing ground of innocence but a source of corruption. Sutpen loses the innocence that he had acquired as a member of the simple, equitable mountainous community of Northern Virgina as soon as he comes in contact with the Jefferson community. He becomes fired with the desire to dominate others and acquisition of
appurtenances and symbols of this domination becomes his single aim in life. He adopts the Southern racial attitudes to the extent that he can allow incest but not accept miscegenation. His attitude towards women is extremely crude. He treats them as if they were merely breeding animals. His downfall is not so much the result of Civil War as of his own attitudes and refusal to accept the need of any adjustment according to changed circumstances. The fact that the story of Sutpen belongs to the ante-bellum and immediate post-bellum period indicates Faulkner's opinion about the past of the South. His prejudices and attitudes are those of his class and times not a result of the influence of modernity. If Faulkner has made him look so impressive, it is to heighten the tragic impact of his fall.

It is not only the main characters who show the disastrous consequences of the strangulating hold of the past on the present; a wide spectrum of various types shows how the conditioning by the social ambience influences people psychologically. There is Hightower, whose fantasies of past glory, bring him very close to being a typical fascist. Percy Grimm, inspite of being
a priest, overbrims with hate and violence because of racial fanaticism and acts like a Nazi storm-trooper. The dietitian has nothing personal against Joe, but she causes him previous harm because she is afraid of the prudish society in which she lives and fears that Joe might tell others about her sexual escapade. Narcissa, inspite of her affairs with younger men, persecutes Ruby as, for the sake of appearances, she does not want her brother to be associated with such people. There are also people whose characters have been warped because of change without any values. Popeye is a product of such change, while Jason and Snopeses are examples of opportunism.

In contrast to these characters are those characters who have a deep understanding of life and survive change. The reason for their ability to withstand the shock of times lies in their being aware that it is natural for the passage of time to bring about changes and that one should accept them without losing one's sense of values. In Sartoris and Sanctuary, having observed succeeding generations of Sartorises, Aunt Jenny, shows a deep understanding of Sartorises' compulsive drive and Narcissa's behaviour. She realizes very
well that the cause of their frustration is their unnatural attitude on account of their concern with the past values. Dilsey, in The Sound and the Fury, is able to bring about some semblance of order and love to the Compson household owing to her simple values and acceptance of change. Just as Quentin's act of destroying the clock is an indication of his rage against time, Dilsey's ability to make out time even with the help of a clock with one hand only is symbolic of her consciousness of the full sequence of time--past, present and future. Still another such positive character is Clytie in Absalom, Absalom!, who makes it her mission in life to take care of the succeeding Sutpen generations.

That a prominent place among positive characters is occupied by Negroes and women reveals that Faulkner does not share at all the ante-bellum ideas about Negroes and women. Indeed, the "nigger" to him is merely a figment of the whiteman's imagination, who to sustain his prejudices ascribes to the Negro all sorts of moral and intellectual deficiencies. In reality, the Negro may prove to be morally superior to the whiteman and capable of possessing a better outlook of life. The arbitrariness of the distinction between the whiteman
and the Negro is brought out very clearly in the case of Joe Christmas and Etienne, son of Charles Bon. Joe is considered a Negro because he is assigned the role of Negro by society without anybody being sure about. Similarly, Etienne lives like a white boy in New Orleans, but Clytie covers his clothes with a denim jumper while bringing him to Jefferson, and he becomes a black boy. Not only does Faulkner emphasise the arbitrariness of racial discrimination and capability of the Negro to be morally superior, but also uses characters like Dilsey as yardsticks to measure the moral worth of other characters. It is obvious from his works that he feels the need for change not only in the white's attitude towards the blacks, but also in the social status of blacks.

As regards women, Faulkner is definitely against unnatural and artificial determination of their being. To him neither the black woman is an animalic receptacle of man's lust nor the white woman a delicate object of worship. Like men, they can be shrewd, hypocritical, cruel, scheming and loving. Their sex drives are natural expressions of their being, and suppression of these drives does not lead to moral superiority but to
psychological distortions. Ruby Goodwin and Lena Grove both are presented as naturally good women inspite of their having conceived out of wedlock, and Ruby's selling her body in order to find money for Goodwin's defence. The redeeming feature in their case is their love, with sex as a natural expression of it, and their motherhood. When this natural expression of sexual drive is repressed it leads either to provocative and deviant behaviour of Temple Drake, or to sexual hypocrisy as in the case of the dietition and Jessica, or to sudden maniacal sexual activity like that of Joanna Burden. There is hardly any hint of rarified, delicate asexual female, so celebrated in the South, about Faulkner's female character. The two women who seem to believe in the Southern code for ladies -- Mrs. Compson and Rosa Coldfield -- are incurable neurotics. Faulkner appears to be in agreement with Frued that suppression of sexual desire leads to a sense of guilt which can malform individual and social personality. In Caddy's case her washing her mouth with soap is a typical Freudian expression of guilt, however, since she is a naturally loving person not a nymphomaniac, she seems to be much better than rest of the Compsons. Other women who
cannot give expression to their sexual feelings openly for fear of social ridicule, behave socially in a sadistic manner.

In one case, Faulkner allows his character to use sex as a weapon against male dominance. Addie has a brief affair with the priest Whitefield as a kind of retaliation against her villainous husband Anse. The fruit of this affair is Jewel. Addie's fondness for Jewel is her compensation for her loveless life with Anse. Faulkner's heroic portrayal of Jewel and portrayal of Anse as an out and out scoundrel is an expression of sympathy with Addie's act of protest against a loveless marriage. It is obvious that Faulkner does not approve of loveless marriage. He also thinks that marriage becomes loveless because of the attitude of males to whom women, as exemplified by Sutpen's attitude, are not so much objects of adoration as breeders of children. Faulkner would obviously like a change in attitude towards women so that they would be treated as human beings and allowed to fulfill their destiny as women.

The characters' attitude to any of the problems mentioned above should not be confused with the attitudes of the writer. His attitude can be determined
on the basis of the totality of the viewpoint that emerges from his works. If his characters capture the imagination of the reader so much that the reader comes under their spell, it is because of his superb craftsmanship. His novels are not narratives of sequential history, they are works of art conceived in the manner of Greek epics and tragedies. The pivotal have to have dimensions of the protagonists and antagonists of epics and tragedies. Like the classical heroes they inexorably move towards their destiny which is predetermined by their attitude, and Faulkner's exploitation of myths and symbols and the use of such devices as stream of consciousness and antithesis so involves the reader's thoughts and feelings that the characters' statements seem to be the writer's statement.

However, the point of view that emerges from the novels does not in anyway support the contention that he is a traditionalist in sympathy with the Southern romantic view of the past and opposed to any change. His novels are no doubt myths of the South but in no way Southern myths. They are statements about static societies and the consequences of stagnation. The message is loud and clear that if a society becomes too obsessed
with the past it turns it back to life sustaining processes and becomes degenerative. He considers life to be a forward movement and change an essential aspect of life. But it should not be a blind change, it must be in association with concomitant values. His attitude towards the Negroes, women, sex and religion (most of his priests are deficient in moral and human values) shows that the values he has in mind are not the traditional values, but the general human values which are a part of modern democratic and humanitarian ethos.