

## Chapter I

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### (A) Life and works of William Faulkner:

William Faulkner was born in 1897 and spent most of his life in Oxford, Mississippi, the seat of the University of Mississippi. He did not finish high school. He served a period in the Canadian Royal Air Force, and during 1919-1921 was a special student at the University of Mississippi. He later served the University as postmaster for a time before going to New Orleans in quest of a literary career. In that city, he became a friend of Sherwood Anderson, the author of Winesburg, Ohio, to whom William Faulkner owed much for his own early development. He wrote verse, criticism, and began his novel writing career in New Orleans before he returned to Oxford, Mississippi, where he made his home\_\_\_with brief excursions into the outer world\_\_\_until his death, July 6, 1962.

The name of William Faulkner is associated with "Yoknapatawpha",<sup>1</sup> the setting of much of his major work. The careful readers of the fiction of Yoknapatawpha County had all along noted that Faulkner's characters have " a soul, spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."<sup>2</sup>

Faulkner published more than a dozen and a half novels and some eighty short stories. In his novels and short stories,

he has made the most ambitious effort to present not only the South, the locale of most of the fiction, but also the "human heart in conflict with itself."<sup>3</sup> His popular novels at home and abroad are Sartoris(1929), The Sound and the Fury (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1936), The Unvanquished (1938), A Fable (1954).

"These novels are the core of Faulkner's major achievement--- They are a brilliant beginning of Faulkner's profound analyses of the human moral condition, for which he is now justly known and admired."<sup>4</sup> His most notable work of the last period is the Snopes trilogy: The Hamlet (1940), The Town (1957), and The Mansion (1959).

Faulkner had his own creed of writing. "I discovered," he wrote, "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 by sublimating the actual into apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top."<sup>5</sup> In following his line of "sublimating the actual into apocryphal," he "created a cosmos" of his own \_\_\_\_\_ Yoknapatawpha County, the setting of much of his major work (the name Yoknapatawpha is an old American Indian name for the river). In this probing of his native soil, he brought a relevance of history seen in the developing present and he understood that the preoccupation of the Southern aristocracy with the

past filled the present with a living sickness which could only mean disaster.

(B) Nobel award acceptance speech:

"At the presentation ceremonies in Stockholm Faulkner's distinguished appearance and dignity of manner made an excellent impression. His speech of acknowledgement undoubtedly is one of the great speeches of this century, and already has become a fixture of anthologies."<sup>6</sup> It is given here in full.

" I feel that this award was not made to me as a man but to my work \_\_\_\_ a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will someday stand here where I am standing."

"Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: when will I

be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.

"He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed — love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so he labours under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and worst of all without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

"Until he relearns these things he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that

man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honour and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail."<sup>7</sup>

FOOTNOTES

1. Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), P.115.
2. Robert Coughlan, The Private world of Willaim Faulkner (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), P.137.
3. Ibid., P.136.
4. Frederick J.Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (eds.), William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1951), P.270.
5. James B.Meriwether and Michael Millgate (eds.), Lion in the Garden : Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962 (New York: Random House, 1968), P.255.
6. Robert Coughlan, The private world of William Faulkner (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), P.135.
7. Ibid., P.135.