

Tribhuvan University

Racial Treatment of Denial in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

By

Naresh Dhital

University Campus

Kirtipur

July, 2006

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This thesis entitled "Racial Treatment of Denial in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Naresh Dhital has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I welcome this opportunity to thank Mr. Ghanashyam Sharma, Lecturer of Central Department of English, T.U. who supervised my research. His wide-ranging knowledge and critical acumen have led to many improvements in the substance and helped me to give the final shape of this thesis.

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to Professor Chandra Prakash Sharma, Head of the Central Department of English for granting me an opportunity to carry out this research. I have the usual acknowledgement to other teachers who helped in the production of this research. I am especially grateful to Dr. Krishan Chandra Sharma, Mr., Devi Gautam, Mr. Hem Poudel and Mr. Lok Bahadur Chhetri for their valuable suggestions.

I am heavily indebted to my parents, Mr. Narayan Prasad Dhital and Mrs. Sabitra Dhital, brothers, Suresh and Umesh who constantly supported and provided encouragements to carry out this research work.

Mr. Jitendra Nepali deserves my heartfelt thanks for his co-operation during the preparation of my thesis. In the same manner, I would like to thank Kamal Lamsal, Basant R.C., Murari Subedi and other friends for their kind co-operation and encouragement.

Finally, I am thankful to Manique Dangol, M. M. Communication for his fine typing and printing.

Naresh Dhital

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

July, 2006

Abstract

This research work explores how denial of racial equality shatters the Southern white peoples' dream of achieving high social status. It analyzes Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* to trace the source of the protagonist, Thomas Sutpen's failure to found a noble family dynasty due to his own failure to adopt an attitude of racial equality. The work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis. The second chapter discusses 'race and 'race relation' as critical tools to analyze the text. The third chapter analyzes the text to prove the point that racial prejudice brings disintegration in the lives of the whites. The fourth chapter summarizes the findings of the work.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

I: INTRODUCTION **1-13**

Review of Literature

II: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION **14-29**

Race and Racism

Race Relation

Racism in America

III: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS **30-46**

Racial Treatment of Denial in *Absalom, Absalom!*

IV: CONCLUSION **47-49**

Works Cited

I. INTRODUCTION

The present research is a study of William Faulkner's eighth novel *Absalom, Absalom!* published in 1936. It explores how racial prejudice proves fatal not only for the blacks but also for the whites. The protagonist, Thomas Sutpen becomes envious of the Tidewater aristocracy in the South and resolves to emulate the wealthy planters of the region. But racial prejudice comes in the way of his ambitious design, and he begins to repudiate his wife and infant son upon discovering that they are part-Negro. So, the main concern of this study is to trace Sutpen's failure to establish his noble family dynasty to the Southern Aristocrat's denial of racial equality. His inability to accept the blacks as equal humans leads him to the failure of his noble aim. Thus, Sutpen's discriminatory attitude towards the blacks causes disintegration in his life.

Racial discrimination is often based on the discrimination of 'color' where the word discrimination denotes the denial of equality is based on personal characteristics such as race and color. Discrimination of color where the word discrimination denotes the denial of equality based on personal characteristics such as race and color. Discrimination is based on prejudice and stereotyping where the stereotype refers to the forming an instant fixed ideas of a group usually based on false or incomplete information, and prejudice refers to the prejudice based on ideas that are formed without any knowledge about others. Gretchen Gerzina defines racism as follows:

An active or passive response to the specious belief that genetically transmitted traits are linked to social characteristics . . . Racism at individual level involves a misguided personal belief that an entire racial group is deficient or superior because trait that are thought to be indicated by the group's biological origins (126).

Racism is the product of racial prejudice, and it works with biological and sociological definition. Queen and Gruener define, "From the biological standpoint, a 'race' is a large body of people, relatively homogenous as to inheritable. Non-adaptive features. . . . There are various criteria of race-head, hair, skin color, stature, blood group and so on" (21).

Racism is founded on the belief in one's racial superiority over other. It encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and practices that define people on racial basis. It involves a generalized lack of knowledge or experiences as it implies to negative beliefs and attitude. It uses the inflexible assumption that differences are biologically determines and therefore inheritably unchangeable.

Racism can be both overt and covert. Overt racism is what most people are familiar with since it is easily detectable and takes the form of direct behavioral or verbal racially discriminatory acts. Covert racism is mere subtle, yet occurs more often than over racism, and is more easily hidden, denied or discounted. Racism has basically three forms: Individual racism institutional racism and cultural racism. If a white colored American brutally kills a Negro, it is overt individual racism, and if an employer

decides not to admit a negro employee because he/she believes that the employees might drive away business, but tells the person that there are no more openings available is an example of covert individual racism. If a Country Club that has clearly written rules which exclude any non-white members, it is an example of overt institutional racism; and if an academic curriculum that only emphasizes European American history and doesn't accept the history of black ethnic/cultural group, it is an example of covert institutional racism. Likewise, the mass killings of blacks (as the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust) and enslavements of African-Americans is overt cultural racism, and the unrealistic and stereotypical portrayal of ethnic minorities on the media is an example of covert cultural racism.

Race relation implies all relationships which determine the relative status of racial groups in community. B. Berry uses the term race and Ethnic relation to describe and analyses the "phenomena which arises when group of people who differ racially or culturally come into contact with one another" (VII). In race and Ethnic relations, B. Berry offers the definitions as "differential treatment accorded individuals who are considered as belonging in a particular category or group" (372). He illustrates with negative treatment, "Dominant people every where have resorted to various devices for restricting economically, politically and socially the racial and ethnic group over when they have set themselves" (432). G.W. Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* finds, "The conception of discrimination as the

overt manifestation of prejudice which comes about when we take steps to exclude members of an outer group. . ." (52-3).

Prejudice is an unfavorable and negative attitude toward a group or its individual members. It is characterized by stereotyped belief. The attitude results from processes within the bearer of the attitude rather than from reality testing of the attributes of the group in question. In social sciences, the term prejudice is used almost exclusively in relation to ethnic group. Racial prejudice can be defined as an attitude of generalized hostility or aggression against a group of human beings who possess different 'color.' It manifests itself in such ethnic stereotypes as the lazy Negro, the drunken Indian, the unscrupulous Jew or the unruly Irishman. It may be a manifestation of conformity to group norms.

The present study examines how racism has made the Southern White community displaced and disintegrated. The American South originally belonged to Afro-Americans who gave a new shape to the landscape by building houses clearing the forest and planting and harvesting crops. It was shaped by their labor, so they still have the spiritual relationship with the South. But, it is surprising to state that they were the tenants in their own land, they were alien in their own country. Their labor was valued, yet they were dehumanized. It was neither economically nor legally their own land. The white claimed for the land cultivated by supposed inferior race. Nowadays black Americans consider the South as their motherland. The Southern Landscape encodes their ancestors, their family history, and their identity. Place in this sense is a space to which meaning has been ascribed.

Carolyn Jones says, "That human relationship that occurred there holds the ultimate meaning the region has for the blacks and they also inscribe the realities that have affected psychological wholeness and self-identity" (38).

Indeed the real practice of racial discrimination began with the discovery of New World. It was a new Hemisphere that also brought radical changes in the outlook of people in the South. The racially victimized people left the South in the post-bellum period in the hope of gaining freedom. The North was not the Promised Land for the blacks. Racial prejudice was greater in Free States than in the slave States. The government legally abolished racial discrimination and there were equal opportunities for blacks. But, at the unconscious level there was still racial prejudice which causes hindrance in both side black and white. William Faulkner, who basically focused on the post war world in his novels, became increasingly concerned with such evils of modern society in the 1930s especially in the South.

In his works, he used the American South as a microcosm for the universal theme of time. He saw the south as a nation by itself. In an attempt to create a saga of his own, Faulkner has invented a host of characters typical of the historical growth and subsequent decadence of the South. The human drama in Faulkner's novels, Pen Warren writes, "is then built on the model of the actual, historical drama extending over almost a century and a half each story and each novel contributes to the construction of a whole, which is the imaginary Yoknapatawpha County and its inhabitants" (3). Their theme is the decay of the old South, as represented by

the Sartoris and Compson families, and the emergence of ruthless and brash newcomers, the Synopses.

Faulkner's theme and technique of the distortion of time through the use of the inner monologue are fused particularly successfully in his first successful novel, *The Sound and Fury* (1929), the downfall of the Compson family seen through the minds of several characters. The novel, *Sanctuary* (1931) is about the degeneration of Temple Drake, a young girl from a distinguished Southern family. Its sequel, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), written partly as a drama, centered on the courtroom trial of a Negro woman who had once been a party to temple Drake's debauchery. In *Light in August* (1932), prejudice is shown to be most destructive when it is internalized, as in Joe Christmas, who believes, though there is no proof of it, that one of his parents was Negro. The theme of racial prejudice is again brought up in *Absalom, Absalom!* in which a young man is rejected by his father and brother because of his mixed blood. Faulkner's most outspoken moral evaluation of the relationship and problems between Negroes and whites is to be found in *Intruder in the Dust* (1948).

William Faulkner now is recognized as one of America's greatest novelists of the 20th century. In each of his novels published between 1929 and 1936, it seemed as though fiction was being reinvented. He wrote various issues such as childhood, family, sex, race, obsession, time, the native South and modern world. William Faulkner is not isolated

Aesthetic phenomena, but is the man who inherited a strong and ambivalent family legend, who never got along with his father, less deserted him, who felt himself displaced in his life. Wittenberg comments:

Faulkner's work reflects, and is strongly influenced by the events and tension in his own life. Since the tensions are more significant than the external events, the study is necessarily psychological literary criticism is no so notoriously beset with pitfalls that it is worth while to point out things. (634)

Similarly, Donald M. Kartiganer's perception of Faulkner is that of a 'modern' (the term is honorific) writer, hence concerned with flux and change, and that disjointed fragmentary form is used to communicate the Dionysian chaos which is reality. It is a serious misleading to look for myths, linked imagery, consistent themes or any other patterns (except, of course Kartiganer's) in Faulkner's work. It is however, legitimate and necessary to enshrine him in the pantheon of modernist writers.

In a profound way Faulkner resembles Robert Frost, and his relation to the South resembles that of Robert Frost to New England. Both men seem so deeply demanded by their moment in history. At the very end of their respective cultures, that, forgetting the matter of genius, one is tempted to say that the moment is the man, and the man a role created by the moment. Most of Faulkner's works are based on the Southern history. Robert Penn Warren comments, "Faulkner's works were certainly Southern to the bone, and it was easy to find elements of Southern life in Faulkner's works" (6).

The present research work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter gives an introductory outline of the research, a short historical context of race and race relation, and a short literature review. Moreover, it gives a bird's eye view of the entire work.

The second chapter tries to briefly explain the theoretical modality that is going to be applied in this research work. It explains shortly the origin of the race, racism, racial history and racial discrimination in America.

On the basis of the theoretical modality outlined in the second chapter, the third chapter will analyze the text at a considerable length. It will analyze the protagonist's denial of racial equality especially in Southern American society. It will sort out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study - racial prejudice causes disintegration in the family and society.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research. On the basis of the textual analysis in the third chapter, it will conclude the explanation and arguments of the claims made earlier.

Literature Review

William Faulkner is a well known literary figure of twentieth century America. He occupies a unique position in the field of fiction though he has often been charged with being a difficult writer. His work *Absalom, Absalom!* has been approached from different perspectives by numerous critics. This has been precisely so because Faulkner has left it open for interpretation on many grounds.

Absalom, Absalom! is certainly one of America's greatest social tragedy. The novel deals with various themes: themes of legitimacy, legacy, and racial prejudice, with its biblical and epic allusions, however, it also takes on the qualities of a mythological tale, Thomas Sutpens's study becomes a parallel to that of the Southern United States. Because of their prejudices towards blacks, Faulkner suggests that the Southern whites lost everything just as Thomas Sutpen does in the novel.

Right from the beginning its publication in 1936, *Absalom, Absalom!* has been eliciting a host of criticisms. Peter B. High takes the novel as a 'modernist' one as he remarks, like all the other novels, this one is set in Yoknapatawpha country. It is a huge, historical story. Thomas Sutpen plans to establish a great family. But racism, psychological illness and a family tragedy destroy his plans" (135).

Cleanth Brooks has argued that Thomas Sutpen espouses a "design" that he does not understand and pursues it with Yankee abstraction and calculation, that, that he is, indeed foreign to the culture in which he is located. So, he attributes Sutpen's failure in his design to his overreaching ambition, pride and vanity. In this regard, Holman says:

If, however, Sutpen's destiny is shaped by his destructive over reaching ambition, it is certainly the quality of life in the south and particularly the issue of slavery and the inhumanity of racial discrimination that are the mechanics by which his *hubris* is brought low. (542)

However, Michael Millgate regards Sutpen's grand 'design' of establishing a noble family dynasty as having fatal flaw. He believes that this flaw results from Sutpen's lack of human feeling towards other fellow human beings. Millgate writes:

Sutpen's 'mistake,' of course, is inherent in the 'design' itself, in the monstrosity of its attempt to make human flesh and blood conform to the rigid contours of an abstract idea. His failure was a man lies in his refusal to regard even his own family as other than the instruments of his 'design.' His failure as a Southerner lies in his refusal to regard the Negro as a human being. (58)

Critics have always recognized the ways in which *Absalom, Absalom!* focuses on the intense issue of race. What has not been no clearly recognized are the ways the normal explores and interrogates both black racial identity and the construction of white racial identity. Unlike the earlier work, *Light in August*, where a rigid ideology of race characterizes the thinking and destinies of the inhabitants of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Cournty, *Absalom, Absalom!* reveals characters who reject rigid definitions in their attempts are verified, others, denied, but Faulkner's text offers insight that many people even today do not accept: racial identity is not a priori given, Rather, as, Kevin Railey argues:

It is a social construction whose origin was formulated as conscious ruling class policy designed to serve specific social purposes and maintain specific class relations. In its

explorations of Thomas Sutpen's life story *Absalom, Absalom!* exposes the arbitrary nature of the South's form of racial paternalism and juxtaposes it against an ideal that judged people not on race and wealth but on behaviour and character.

(9)

Minrose C. Gwin argues that Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* reverberate with cries of endlessly reenacted racial wounding that fail to dissolve into history or advance to the future and that blur lines between subjects objects and actions. Gwin further writes:

The ever-shifting voice emerging from those wounds is one that underscores the limits of history its inability to inarticulate, comprehend, or assimilate the catastrophes or racism and slavery, and that raises many of the questions of agency, responsibility, and witnessing that so bother Faulkner's most history-haunted protagonists like Quentin Compson. (21)

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner brings many of his previous characters together and tells again the story of the downfall of a family, the gothic tragedy of the house of Thomas Sutpen and his grand design. In this regard, Mr. Breit writes:

It is a terrible Gothic sequence of events, a brooding tragic fable. . . . Was it the "design" that had devoured Sutpen and prevented him from avowing the very thing that would have saved the 'design.' Was it something in the South itself, in its

social, political, moral, economic origins that was responsible for Sutpen and for all the subsequent tragedy? Quentin can make no judgment: Sutpen himself had possessed courage and innocence, and the same land had nourished men and women who had delicacy of feeling and capacity for love and gifts for life. (qtd. in Brooks 186)

Thomas Sutpen comes from a low social status. So, he embarks on his grand design of amassing wealth and slaves and holding high position in society. In his mission to move up a social ladder, Sutpen is not concerned about metaphysical truth, what he is concerned about is social honor and prestige. Peter Swiggart finds similarity between Sutpen and Melville's captain Ahab. "In his consistent demonism Sutpen is comparable to Melville's Captain Ahab, even though Sutpen is in search not of metaphysical truth but of social respectability" (Swiggart 149).

William Faulkner is famous for his unique narrative technique that he employs in his fiction. From the very beginning of his career, Faulkner sought to bring newness in the construction of his novels. He experimented with narrative chronology in an attempt to represent the time as it is experienced rather than as it is summarized. "In *Absalom, Absalom!* many of the important use of figurative language are associated with the interpretation of the narrative witness" (Swiggart 77). Different narrators narrate the story of the novel. Similarly, Tobin Patricia examines the narrative strategy Faulkner employs in the novel:

Absalom, Absalom! offers obstacle upon obstacle to the seeker either continuity. For the reader whose novelistic expectation might reasonably include a chronological narrative related from a single point of view which illuminates a more or less recognizable reality – the novel presents its material fragmented in time and distributed among multiple narratives, each with a passionate involvement that produces differing version of mutual subject. (265)

In this way, the critics, who have reviewed Faulkner's novel from various perspectives, have enriched the meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*

II. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Race and Racism

Race is a notion for the division of human beings into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups. The idea of race divides humanity into unchanging natural types on the basis of physical features that are transmitted "through the blood". Moreover, the term indicates that the mental and moral behaviour of human beings as well as individual personality, capacities, and ideas are related to racial matters.

We can find practice and study of race in the earliest human writing, in the earliest human writing Appiah says:

We can find more or less well-articulated views about the differences between "our own kind" and the people of other cultures. These doctrines, like modern theories of race, have often placed a central emphasis on physical appearance in defining the "Other" and on common ancestry in explaining why groups of people display differences in their attributes and aptitudes. (274)

Hypocrites in the fifth century B.C. in Greece sought to explain their superiority "by arguing the barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher and more independent" (275). However in the *Old Testament*, the people's distinctiveness is defined in terms of relation to God rather than appearance and customs. In "Genesis", Jacob commands Abraham and says: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great

nation. I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing (12:11).

William Dunbar in a poem first used the term "race" in English language in 1508. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became essentially a literary word denoting family, religion, nation, plant and animal life. In the late eighteenth century, the term came to mean a distinct term of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent. Europeans categorized human beings on physical grounds from the late 1600s. Francois Bernier postulated very distinctive characteristics based largely on facial character and skin color. Soon a hierarchy of groups was established. Whites were accepted at the top whereas the Blacks were relegated to the bottom.

Immanuel Kant in his *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) used the German phrase for 'races of mankind'. It was probably the first explicit use of the term for the classification of human beings into biologically or physically distinct groups. Debates about whether human variation was caused by descent or environment continued violently throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The biological science ascended in the later nineteenth century. So descent emerged as the predominant model of human distinctiveness. Despite scientific base and application, the notion 'race' has established the simplest model of human variation-color difference. Color became the means of distinguishing and identifying human beings. French anatomist Cuvier was significant in the development of race theory. He divided human beings

into three groups; the white, the yellow and the black. The division of the whole of humanity into three groups seemed so vague for any kind of analysis. However, the idea has become influential for the ideological reason that this topology is based upon a gradation from superior to inferior. The assumptions underlying this racial topology have remained persistent to the present today. The categories are more elaborately defined as 'Caucasoid', 'Mongoloid' and 'Negroid'. First assumption is that variations in the individual behaviour were linked to the different biological types. Secondly, differences between these types suggested variations in human cultures. Thirdly, the nature of the type accepted the superiority of Europeans and Aryans in particular. Fourthly, innate characteristics play a vital role in the friction nations and individuals of different type. This idea of race was superseded by the implications of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin provided the story of race with a mechanism for species change in the idea of natural selection. He offered the probability for racial development (eugenics). This school of thought came to be known as Social Darwinism. The assumption of superiority was supported by scientific racial theory.

The twentieth century has brought a significant change in the theoretical attitude to race. The 1911 Universal Races Congress in London demonstrated liberal thought and focused on monogenism-the idea that there is only one species of man on earth. Modern scientists, according to Kwame Anthomny Appiah, "believe that such classification as Negro, Caucasian, and Mongoloid are of no importance for biological purposes"

(227). They do not take race as an important aspect of people's identity. Modern science does not believe in racial difference. The 1951 UNESCO *Statement of the Nature of Race and Racial Difference* asserts that mental features should not be incorporated in the classification of human beings in terms of race and environment is more important factor than inherited genetic elements in forming behaviour. However, in the 1960s, there was a sudden rise in biological thinking about human behaviour. The writers such as Lorenz, Morris and Andry asserted that personal behaviour was chiefly controlled by ancient instincts that could be modified by culture. This gave the way for a sudden increase in race thinking in popular science in the 1970s. Eysenck's *Race, Intelligence and Education* (1971). Baxter and Sansom's *Race and Social Difference* (1972) established the term 'race' in debates about human variation.

Fanon was the first to notice that most important fact about race. Racist ideas such as 'blackness' were the psychological force of their construction of self. It means they acquired an objective existence in and through the behaviour of people. The self images and self-construction might be transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, 'the fact of blackness' came to have an objective determination not only in racist behaviours and institutional practices, but more insidiously in the psychological behaviour of the people. So, Fanon stressed on the objective psychological that fact of race as a determining part of social process. The Fanonist stress on construction of individuals' self-perceptions has been the part of the response of many black commentators by critics such as Appiah.

They found that the perceptions of race have acted only negatively. However, fictional race may be shown to be as an objective category. Its power as a discursive formation remains unabated.

So a volatile term "race" takes center stage continuously whereas the theories on which concepts of race were maintained have become more and more effaced.

Race Relations

The term "race relations" refers to those forms of behaviour that arise from the contacts of different racial groups. The concept encompasses all relationships that determine the relative status of racial group in the community. Differences in physical and genetic traits are important in contributing to the economic, social and political relationships. These relationships form the subject matter of race relationships. However, the association of people belonging to one racial origin also involves the association of groups with other racial origin.

A distinction should be established between the usage of the term *race relations* and other related usage. The term is variously used to cover the forms of intergroup, interethnic and majority-minority relationships. In the latter usages, race may or may not be a significant form in the behaviour. These concepts incorporate other forms of behaviour as well.

In the United States since World War II, the concept *intergroup relation* has been used to include negro-white relationships, the contact of religious groups and of different organizations. *Ethnic relation* is not limited to analyze people with distinct racial features. Besides race, the

other forms such as religion, language and nationality are the differentiating features of ethnic groups. For example, in parts of Canada, prejudice and self-conscious behaviour characterize the relationship between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities: these people are of the same racial origin but vary in religion, language, national origin and behaviour. Minorities and racial or ethnic groups that occupy subordinates position in the communities where they live. They suffer segregation and severe political restrictions because of racial, social and cultural characteristics. After the end of British Colonial rule in India, India and Pakistan emerged as separate states owing to religious differences the former predominantly Hindu and the latter Muslim. The separation has witnessed the continued presence of Muslim minorities in India and Hindu minorities in Pakistan.

These related terms imply the behaviour shaped by distinct group features. They are sometimes employed to describe and analyses the phenomena in which race plays a significant role. In the United States, Negro-White relations are taken differently as intergroup, interethnic and majority-minority relations.

A fundamental issue of race relations concerns the effects of contact. Some writers argue that increased contact between groups of different values and origins will cause heightened conflict. Other view that increased contact between such groups will decrease prejudice and fear and lead to intergroup harmony. Social science evidence supports neither of these extremes. Increased interaction between different groups can result in either greater discrimination and rejection or greater respect and acceptance

depending upon the situation in which it happens. Gordon Allport in his review of relevant research concluded that four features of the interaction situation are of the prime importance. Good intergroup relations result when the two groups get equal status, seek common purposes, are helpfully dependent upon each other and interact with the positive support of authorities and law. Ira N. Brophy found that White American merchant seamen tended to hold racial attitudes in relation to Negro-American seamen: the more discriminated, the more negative the latter's attitude toward the former.

To sum up, *race relations* is used to describe and analyze the phenomena which result from the interaction of different racial groups. Interracial contact can result in either prejudice and conflict or harmony depending upon the situation in which it happens. Prejudice and discrimination are the practices or racism.

Racism in America

Racism can be defined as a way of thinking that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked to mental and moral characteristics. On the basis of the physical feature, it distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups. Racism is a way of thinking and discrimination is its practice.

Racism is not a stable ideological form remaining the same for a long period. It rejects all the epithets of singularity and prefers different shapes and different political relations. Paul Gilroy argues that "Racist ideologies

and practice have distinct meanings bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle" (248).

Racism at personal level includes an individual belief that an entire racial group is inferior or superior on the basis of physical features to be linked to intellectual and moral characteristics. If these personal characteristics get connected with cultural institutions like religion, education and military institutions in order to exclude or include not a person but also an entire group, it takes the form of institutionalized racism. A National Council of Churches work group has summarized this institutionalized racism:

Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economics, political, environmental and military institutions of societies. Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude. (Qtd. Feagin 3)

Contemporary form of racism i.e. new racism attaches to the concepts like patriotism, nationalism, gender differences, xenophobia, etc. These concepts give a way to a definition of race in terms of culture and identity.

As European established settlers moved to America, they soon began to import quantities of captives taken from relatively circumscribed portions of the west coast of Africa to do the work they were reluctant to do themselves. Within the course of a couple of centuries, the whole western Hemisphere including Europe becomes populated with representatives of

these distinctive human populations. They were placed face to face with the whites but at very different levels on the socioeconomic scale. The difference in force was then assumed to be inherent in visible physical differences.

American History as such is a book, which comprises essays, each headed with different subjects from the past to the present. Racial, geographical, political divisions and the impact of them on cultural institutions are considerable. Migration problems created by racial division and the change in culture and individual and collective desire are sometimes associated with industrialization and mass production. It obviously influences, positively or negatively, all existing social affairs. The confrontation of two distinct cultures leave cross-cultural effects, one affects another and is itself affected.

Domination of one culture over another by imposing cultural values, or by restricting the possible improvisation of cultural behaviors of the latter one causes psychological disintegration in society. Racial issues aroused by the whites were considered to be unquestionable disintegration. Racial issues aroused by the whites were considered to be unquestionable because the white race and its cultural products are superior to the black ones. The oppression of the people over another sometimes helps both remain alive.

As the Whites, the blacks were also rightful heirs to America's legacy. It is important to note that the first attempt to settle this country were located in the area that would later be known as the South. The South

was made a good home by the blacks with their blood, sweat, and tears. But it is a pity that traditional history disavows that slaves and descendents of slaves have contributed significantly to the making of American culture. The white narratives and historical myth were invented to legitimize the subordination of preconceived inferior people and to affirm Anglo-American cultural superiority and racist agenda. Those narratives made oppression of the blacks seem natural or ordained on the basis of blacks' inferiority.

The American South originally belonged to Afro-American, who gave a new shape to the landscape by building houses, clearing the forests and planting and harvesting crops. It was shaped by their labor, so they still have the spiritual relationship with the South. But it is surprising to state that they were the tenants in their own land, they were aliens in their own country. Their labor was valued, they were dehumanized. It was neither economically nor legally their own land. The white claimed for the land cultivated by supposed inferior race. Nowadays black Americans consider the South as their motherland. The Southern landscape encodes their ancestors, their family history, and their identity. Place in this sense is a space to which meaning has been ascribed. Carolyn Jones says that the human relationship that occurred there holds the ultimate meaning the region has for the blacks and they also inscribe the realities that have affected psychological wholeness and self-identity (38).

The heart-broken difficulties that the blacks enduring the slavery are exposed in Douglass's narrative. Though his own experiences, he

generalizes the bondage of black people. The slave holders who held the sole and whole power were responsible to the blacks in to the land of ignorance about their time and place. They were so ignorant that they didn't know even their own age:

I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves known as little of their ages as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most master with in my knowledge to keep theirs slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. (15)

The mulatto children could not ask the things that the whites of the same age could. The master-father was the power-controller. He could make the rules and laws. He would separate mother and children. They had no alternatives to endurance. They would express hardship through their songs in secluded places. The power-holder would beat the slaves as if the latter's had no life:

Master, however, was not a human slave-holder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He would at times seem to take great pleasure on whipping a slave . . . The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her hush, and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-dotted cow skin. (15)

Such heart-broken punishments were usual in the plantations. The white masters would punish the slaves for their own pleasure. These unsympathetic whites were indeed brutal and similar to beasts. The blacks indeed were human who felt compassion among themselves. Slaves were made-inhuman but, in fact, the white masters were inhuman and beast-like.

The ex-slaves who left the South in the post-bellum period in the hope of gaining sheer freedom faced a dangerous threat in the North. The North was not the Promised Land for the blacks. Racial prejudice was greater in the Free States than in the slave states. Though they were freed; they were isolated from every institution. The blacks encountered racism everywhere in the North. They were barred from most public places. They were denied the right to vote. The revolutionary economic growth and expanded employment opportunities for thousands of workers in the cities were not for blacks. Yet the blacks benefited little from the new labor because white workers often demanded the exclusion of the blacks from the job market. The social, political, economic and racial oppression black people experienced in the North shaped the repression of blacks, the pattern of discrimination, segregation and mass violence which degraded and reduced the blacks to deplorable conditions of illiteracy, hopelessness and poverty. The instability and double consciousness of the self of black people in the post-bellum period is a study of DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. Black people were placed at the bottom of the social ladder. He says that black people were "born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this America world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but

lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world " (364) .

They looked at their slaves, through the others eyes that could not penetrate the bodies to see the black slaves. A single body having two souls, two thoughts and two unreconciled strivings could not strive in the society.

They were torn apart within. "The history of the America Negro" according to Du Bios, "is the history of the strife- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double-self into a bitter and truer self" (365). His wish never to lose his orders self and to have a better self could lead him only to impasse. He would wish to be an Africanized American.

Despite being freed, black women during the last quarter of the 19th century lived a life of tumultuous uncertainty. During slavery their lives were shaped and complicated by their racialized and gendered historical circumstances in the South. The sexuality of black slave women was subject to attraction by commodification, exploitation, or abuse. Now their lives were shaped by uncertainty. After the emancipation proclamation, only few opportunities were allowed to them than those they had assumed during slavery. They continued to suffer from racism's oppressive discrimination. During the period the historical particulars gave rise to migration from the South to the North; women left the South in search of a new horizon. But they found little and lost much.

In the North black people had great difficulties in understanding themselves and their world in their alien urban surrounding. They had to recreate home that could provide shelter, protection, and of which they could feel possessive. This task for finding a new place at first and then

establishing new community and identity was both difficult and necessary. It was the task filled with conflicting emotions, intimacy and separation, familiarity and alienation. They were the "New Negroes" attempting to mediate their private rural self with their urban one. Thus urban life in the new place was characterized by alienation, isolation and fragmentation that felt. Now finding themselves in a fragmented community and split self, they began to look at their souls through the eyes of the whites. The nature of their double consciousness encompassed not only issues of race but also if gender as well as regional displacement.

During the World War I, black people were encouraged to bring their labor and skills to the North. Many of the newspapers in the northern press published advertisements "inviting them to bring their labor and skills to the North and claiming that tickets for journey would come from prospective employers" (Beavers 61). Believing themselves as capable workers and men anxious to prove their worth, they intended to do whatever jobs were available until a better opportunity would present itself. They believe that the North would represent potential sources of a reversal of fortune, as a result better stable home-life. In the South where Jim Crow laws and violence were deployed to keep black people at bay, black people saw the North as an embodiment of access. But there were three under-currents in the invitation: they could be separated from their own community in the South, they could be paid for their labor, and they were easy to oppress in the new environment.

The blacks believed that the North was a natural site into which they could impose their presence. "The relationship between their bodies and their subjectivity is shaped by the move from rural space to urban space, where, in literal terms, they find their bodies transformed, citified, urbanized as distinctively metropolitan" (Beavers 64). They were preoccupied with how to adjust and improve themselves in the built environment. Denied the possession of land of their one, they were inspired by the situation to acquire, conserve and manage material goods that they could possess in the North. Unfortunately the Northern life would be radically different from the southern because the valued labor was deceptive. Who thought about the possibility of lynching and disfranchisement? They didn't suspect the sort of political and social advantages to be found in the Northern life.

The history of America began with the grabbing of the land from Native Americans and enforcing the blacks to cultivate the land. It consequently created hierarchies in color and division of land. The whites established a system of privilege in terms of oppression and exploitation. The history of American society is a history of oppression and migration. American geographical and cultural space has provided limitless potential to the whites since its settlement, but the blacks have been denied such spaces. Their African heritage and the southerners are repudiated by the larger culture. Over the different historical events-slavery, emancipation, migration, integration they tried to negotiate their relationship with their cultural tradition. But white race and its cultural heritage consistently

marginalized them. It would not be unjust, therefore, to say that American history itself is a practice of racism.

In the case of poor whites in the South, things were not so favorable. Historically, the ordeal of Virginian developed because of the significantly large number of poor whites living there. Whites bond-labor had been much cheaper than black for quite some time, and unlike many other places in the New World, the plantation colonies, especially Virginia were inhabited by a large number of poor whites. At the same time, plantation colonies were quite rigid societies developed expressly for the sole purpose of profit-making of the plantation owners and these societies offered little room for advancement on the part of poor whites. (*Southern Ideology of Race* 13)

This situation left the poor whites with bitter experience, leading them towards achieving high status as that of rich plantation owners. Thus, the limited white aristocrats' life style generated racial prejudice in the poor whites.

III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Racial Treatment of Denial in *Absalom, Absalom!*

In William Faulkner's novel, *Absalom, Absalom!* the protagonist Thomas Sutpen is a son of a poor white in Southern American society. His dream of moving up the social ladder, that is to establish a noble family dynasty as he calls a "design" (197) bears no fruit when he rejects the relationship with the blacks. He refuses to recognize his own child born of a partly black woman. His 'design' crumbles when he defies the claims of love, kinship, fatherhood, and brotherhood, when they run athwart the taboos of race. This arrogance of Sutpen brings about his own tragic end. Thus, the novel traces the sources of Thomas Sutpen's failure to establish his noble family dynasty to the southern aristocrat's denial of racial equality.

Thomas Sutpen embodies the rise and fall of southern aristocrats, their ideals and dream. Sutpen originally comes from a poor white family in the West Virginia, where he was unaware of the differences in social class and race. Later on, his family moves to the Tidewater section of Virginia in the South in the plantation colonies. These colonies were heavily inhabited by a large number of poor whites and blacks who worked for the rich aristocrats on the plantation. As it becomes clear in his family's descent down the mountains into the Tidewater section of Virginia, Sutpen for the first time begins to learn the difference between white and black. He once observes:

. . . 'niggers' working in the fields while white men sat fine horses and watched them, and more fine horse and men in fine clothes, with a different look in the face from mountain men about the taverns where the old man was not allowed to come in by the front door and from which his mountain drinking manners got him ejected before he would have time to get drunk good (so that now they began to make really pretty good time) and no laughter and jeers to the ejecting now, even if the laughter and jeers had been harsh and without much gentleness in them. (187)

Before this incident, Sutpen was quite innocent of black white relationship. This leaves an indelible impression on his child psychology. He finds the vast gap not only between the black and white, but also between the poor white and the rich white in course of living in the plantation colonies. Next time when he goes to a plantation to deliver a message from his father to the plantation owner, he is not allowed to enter from the front door because of his low social standing. Sutpen is consequently outraged when a well-dressed Negro butler refuses to let him enter the front door of a Tidewater mansion:

And now he stood there before that white door with the monkey nigger barring it and looking down at him in patched made-over jeans clothes and no shoes and I do not reckon he had ever experienced with comb because that would be one of the things that his sisters would keep hidden good – who had

never thought about his own hair or clothes or anybody else's hair or clothes until he saw that monkey nigger, who through no doing of his own happened to have had the facility of being house bred in Richmond may be, looking . . ." (192)

In this moment Sutpen realizes that not all people are the same, and this revelation changes the way that he has viewed people and their race so far. He is sent to the back door because he is considered to be of lower socio-economic status than the other white people on the plantation and, in fact, lower than the black slaves who belong to the plantation owners. Standing at door which he can not enter, the youth remembers incidents in the past involving Negroes. Once a coachman drives his proud sister off the road with a scornful "Hoo dar, gall ! Git outen de way dar!"(209). The boy retaliates by throwing clods of dirt at the disappearing coach. He sees himself throwing dirt not at a hated superior, but at "the actual dust raised by the proud delicate wheels, and just hat vain" (231).

Once he becomes aware of these differences, however, the actions of his life are put into motion towards its end. He loses his innocence in one crucial moment, and his perspective of the world changes, just as the South was drawn away from its idealistic views. The immediate object of the boy's hatred is the Negro butler and not Pettibone, the aristocrat. Sutpen seems to blame Pettibone less for social injustice than for placing slaves in a position where they can intimidate himself and his family. From this moment on, Sutpen becomes focused on maintaining racial prejudice in order to make sure that his dynasty would be perfect. His new way of thinking reflects the

Southern ideal and perspective that white people are to be above blacks, especially in position of power. The boy accepts this denial of a Negro's individuality and imagines the slave's ball face poised above the men, "Levitative and slick with paper thin distension." When someone tries to strike the balloon face, it seems to escape and "overwhelm" them with "roaring waves of mellow laughter meaningless and terrifying and loud" (232).

This revelation leaves an image which is metamorphosed in the boy's mind into the "monkey nigger" who bars Pettibone's door. As young Sutpen's hatred and jealousy come to a focus, he sees himself "looking out from within the balloon face" (234) as if he were the aristocrat. He discovers for what seems the first time the squalid poverty of his family. He imagines its members as cattle, "creatures heavy and without grace, brutally evacuated into a world without hope or purpose for them" (190). Their only future is "a succession of cut-down and patched and made-over garments bought on exorbitant credit because they were white people, from stores where 'niggers' were given the garments free, with for sole heritage that expression on a balloon face bursting with laughter" (235). Negro laughter is a "barricade" which guards Pettibone and his riches from poor-white ambitions (212). It is in response to these humiliating incidents that Sutpen conceives his "design" to "combat them" and to found a dynasty that would carry on. In order to do combat, the Sutpen realizes, "You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat themwith." (259). As an adult, Sutpen translates his humiliation into a morally glamorous "boy-symbol:"

Now he would take that boy in where he would never again need to stand on the outside of a white door and knock at it; and not at all for mere shelter but so that boy, that whatever nameless stranger, could shut that door known, and look ahead along the still undivulged light rays in which his descendants who might not even having to know that they had once been riven forever from brut hood just as his own (Sutpen's) children were . . . (216)

Firmly committed to his 'design' of establishing a noble family dynasty, Sutpen then promptly runs away and goes to the West Indies. He has learned in school that in the West Indies, a man could make his fortune if he "was clever and courageous" (257). He starts working on a plantation there and distinguishes himself by the age of twenty. When a terrifying revolt breaks out, Sutpen is barricaded in the house with the French plantation owner's family. As a clever and diplomatic person, he stops the slave revolt single-handedly. In reward, the plantation owner offers Sutpen the privilege of marrying his daughter Eulalia. Finding this opportunity as a step towards achieving his goal, he readily accepts the offer and marries the plantation owner's daughter. The narrator remarks, "he had got at last that wife who would be adjunctive to the forwarding of that 'design' he had in his mind" (209). After a couple of year, Eulalia bears him a part black son. To his astonishment, Sutpen discovers that his wife also possesses Negro blood. But then, Sutpen says, he discovers that:

They deliberately withheld from me the one fact which I have reason to know they were aware would have caused me to decline the entire mate, otherwise they would not have withheld if from me a fact which I did not learn until after my son was born . . . this new fact rendered it impossible that this woman and child be incorporated in my design. (187)

Apparently, "he repudiated that first wife and that child when the discovered that they would not be adjunctive to the forwarding of the design"(189). Thus, his racial prejudice brings Sutpen to the point of abandoning his own family members.

The racial difference that Sutpen has internalized in connection with his living in the plantation makes it impossible for him to accept his wife and son. He does not "put aside" Eulalia due to any natural antipathy; he does so purely because he has learned the social lesson of the Southern aristocratic ideology of race so well "any one with any African heritage will be considered black and this identity will limit access to power and social position" (Railey 3). He has no anger against Eulalia, and later not even any against his son, Charles Bon. Because of his lust for high social position, Sutpen cannot accept Eulalia and Charles Bon because they are tainted with part Negro blood. The rich white aristocrats use the poor blacks as slaves in their houses. So, as Sutpen wants to achieve the position of Southern aristocrats, there is no question of him accepting part-black wife and son as his family members.

Sutpen is not without morality or a certain code of honour. He is, according to his own lights, a just man. It is this southern aristocratic ideology that makes him biased towards the blacks. As he told Quentin's grandfather with reference to his rejection of his first wife;

Suffice that I . . . accepted [my wife] in good faith, with no reservations about myself, and I expected as much from [her parents]. I did not demand credentials][as one of my obscure origin might have been expected to do . . . I accepted them at their own valuation while indicting on my part upon explaining fully about myself and my progenitors: yet they deliberately withheld from me one fact which I have reason to know they were aware would have caused me to decline the entire matter. (210)

Sutpen, like most of the Southern aristocrats is obsessed with the idea of creating the ultimate Southern existence according to the 'design,' the American dream. He rises from a life of poverty, working hard to acquire enough money to allow him to recreate himself, resettle, and start a new life. He is able to fulfill the Southern requirements of owning land, building an immense estate, and marrying a Christian woman. However, just as in the case of the downfall of the Southern aristocracy, the flaw that becomes the catalyst of Sutpen's demise is his acquired sense of "ethnic identity and racial prejudice" (Swiggart 160). Thus, he is unable to accept his son, who is born to a partially black mother, because the son's mixed race does not fit into his plans for the ideal design of a Southern aristocrat.

This ideal 'design' of Sutpen leads him to reject his wife and son; he deserts them and leaves for Jefferson in the hope of pursuing his noble pursuit. He arrives in Jefferson Mississippi, with some 'slaves' and a French architect who is something of an 'indentured' servant with him. As for slavery, Sutpen does not confine himself to black chattel slavery only. He ruthlessly bends any one that he can to his will. The white French architect whom he brings into Yoknapathwpha county to build his house is as much a slave as any of his black servants: Sutpen "hunts him down with dogs" when he tries to escape (105). He comes there with a lot of Negroes in pompous manner because he wants to show the people that he has high position in society. His arrival is described as:

. . . a man who rode into town out of nowhere with a horse and two pistols and a herd of wild beasts that he had hunted down single-handed because he was stronger in fear than even they were in whatever heathen place he had fled from, and that French architect who looked like he had been hunted down and caught in turn by two Negroes. (63)

Jefferson gives him what he craves for. He buys a large plot from a local Native American tribe and immediately builds a large plantation called "Sutpen's Hundred," including an ostentatious mansion (12). Luckily for him, he gets protection and everything he has sought from Mr. Coldfield whose daughter he marries later. The narrator writes:

He sought the guarantee reputable men to barricade him from the other and later strangers who might come seeking him in

turn, and Jefferson gave him that. Then he needed respectability, the shield of a virtuous woman, to make his position impregnable even against the men who had given him protection on that inevitable day an hour when even they must rise against him in scorn and horror and outrage; and it was mine and Ellen's father who gave him that. (11)

All he needs to complete his plans is a wife to bear him a male heir, so he ingratiates himself with a local merchant and marries his daughter, Ellen Coldfield. But Sutpen is so occupied with achieving a noble status that marrying a wife becomes just like buying animals and servants to improve his poor condition. He does not regard his wives as human beings: "and that he had now come to town to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Merphis market to buy livestock or slaves" (33).

As Sutpen has been impressed by the plantation owner's status which Sutpen thinks noble because of the Negro slaves kept at the doors, Sutpen has brought Negro slaves into his "Sutpen's Hundred:" "Sutpen had brought in half a dozen of his wild niggers to wait at the doors burning in knots" (41). In this way, Sutpen regards the Negroes as only servants to serve the whites. He is not ready to treat them as human beings with equal right and respect as whites.

Keeping Negro servants becomes a means of achieving high social status for Sutpen as he has internalized this because of his direct experience at the plantation owner's house. Therefore, he returns to his big mansion in a pompous manner with Negroes:

. . . at least some of them were telling one another that when two months later he returned, again without warning and accompanied this time by the covered wagon with a Negro driving it and on the seat with the negro a small alerting resigned man with a gum, harried Latin face in a frock coat and flowered waist coat and a hat which he was to wear constantly for the next two years." (28)

As Sutpen is aware of racial difference, he deals with the Negro slaves considering their psychology. While the Negroes are working at his house, Sutpen does not say anything that irritates them. He does not want to argue with them when there is delay in the work. He tries to lead them prudently. However, Sutpen responds to the Negroes' greeting with a nod as superior owner of the "Sutpen's Hundred":

. . . when the machinery slowed, hitched to it as if the negroes actually were wild men; while the negroes were working, Sutpen never raised his voice at them, that instead he led them, caught them at psychological instant by example, by some ascendancy of forbearance rather than by brute fear. Without dismounting his horse usually Sutpen did not even greet them with as much as a nod, apparently as unaware of their presence as if they had been idle shades. (30)

In addition, the Negroes become the means of entertainment for the whites as Sutpen puts them to fight in his "Sutpen's Hundred" and down there in the stable a hollow square of faces in the lantern light, the white

faces on all sides, and in the centre two of his "wild Negroes fighting, naked fighting not like white men fight with rules and weapons, but like negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad" (23). This shows that Sutpen treats his Negroes just like animals, who entertain the whites by fighting fatally. There is another reference of the Negroes being put to fight:

. . . at night played cards and drank, and on occasion he doubtless pitted his negroes against one another and perhaps even at this time participated now and then himself that spectacle which, according to Miss Coldfield, his son was unable to bear the sight of while his daughter looked on unmoved . . . Matched two of his Wild Negroes against one another as men match game cocks or perhaps even entered the ring himself. (17)

The trait that most decisively sets Sutpen apart from his neighbors in the matter of race is his fighting with his Negro slaves. Sutpen is accustomed to stripping to the waist and fighting it out with one of his slaves, not with rancor, one supposes, and not at all to punish the slaves, but simply to keep fit – to prove to himself and incidentally to his slaves that he is "the better man," as Brooks thinks (189). In fact, he fights with his slave to prove himself strong and powerful than the Negroes

The narrator again mentions of Sutpen who for some years, spends his days involving himself in such activities, and thinking that he has succeeded in his 'design.' But his hopes for the future are threatened by the

arrival of Charles Bon; his first son from a deserted part-Negro wife. Sutpen cannot recognize a Negro as a son. He keeps mum until he finds out that Bon becomes engaged to his daughter, Judith. Sutpen faces two problems before him. One is that the marriage between Bon and Judith would be incestuous and another is that Bon has Negro blood and in addition, he has an "Octoroon" (a woman who is one eighth black) wife and baby in New Orleans (99). But Sutpen's son, Henry does not know about the reality and takes side with Bon. The question of Negro blood bothers Sutpen more than that of incestuous relation. So, he wants to stop the marriage. Sutpen rebukes Henry: "Have you forgot that this woman, this child, are niggers? You, Henry Sutpen of "Sutpen's Hundred in Mississippi? You, talking of marriage, a wedding, here?" (98). In this way, Sutpen tries to pass along his racial intolerance and prejudice to his son Henry. However, Henry is not affected by only this event until he finds out this reality of Bon having negro-blood. So, Henry repudiates his birthright: "He repudiated blood birthright and material security for his sake, for the sake of this man who was at least an intending bigamist" (74).

Henry Sutpen refuses to allow Charles Bon to marry Judith unless Charles will renounce an 'Octoroon' mistress he maintains in New Orleans. Henry's opposition to the marriage takes root in his father's conviction that an acknowledged part-Negro cannot be compatible with a respectable marriage. As Henry Sutpen learns from his father that Charles Bon possesses Negro-blood, Henry, refuses Bon's marriage though he is ready to condone the incestuous relationship between Bon and Judith. Henry learns

that "Charles was his brother, but, despite this, was willing to condone Charles's marriage with Judith, believing . . . It was only when he learned that Charles has Negro blood that he refused to allow it. Charles persisted and Henry killed him" (7)

Thomas Sutpen could have already averted this incestuous marriage between his son and daughter by telling them frankly about the reality, but his pride and racial prejudice in accepting a Negro-blooded person as his son complicate the situation. Sutpen's rejection of Charles Bon to recognize as his son symbolizes the rejection of the plantation Negro butler's to let him enter through the front door. In this regard, Peter Swiggart writes:

But unfortunately for the planter's peace of mind, the boy-symbol who seeks admittance at Sutpen's "White door" is Charles Bon. In refusing to acknowledge a part-negro son, Sutpen reveals that resentment at being insulted by a Negro is far stronger than his social idealism. In denying recognition to bon, Sutpen rejects the best part of himself and reveals the selfish of his moral design. (6)

In this way, Henry learns to deny racial equality from his father. Sutpen and his son Henry's attitude towards the blacks can thus be traced to that of Southern aristocrat's attitude towards the blacks. In this regard William Van O'Connor writes:

Sutpen's flaw – he is forever asking what went wrong in his "design" – was not merely his flaw, it was Henry's flaw, and the south's flaw: the inability to accept the Negro as human

equal. It was over this that the war was fought and because of this that the Sutpen family was ruined. (27)

Finally, when he cannot tolerate racial equality, Henry kills his older half-brother, Charles Bon, and then flees to avoid punishment. Henry is unable to accept black as equals just like his father in the post war Southern society and in no way could he tolerate having a black man as a brother-in-law, even if he has been a relative already.

Sutpen finds himself without an heir to the "Sutpen Hundred." In an effort to beget a male heir, he becomes engaged to his dead wife's sister, Rosa who has now come to live at the plantation, but out of pride and vanity, when he suggests they have a child first and "if it were a boy they would marry, she broke off their engagement in outrage" (217). This male chauvinistic nature of Sutpen can also be associated with his intolerance of racial equality. In order to forward his design, Sutpen can neither accept racial equality nor can he accept gender equality, setting in motion his own disintegration and destruction.

However, it would seem that the prevailing relation between the races in Jefferson is simply one more of the southern cultural traits which Sutpen takes from the plantation community into which he has come as a boy out of the mountains of western Virginia. Sutpen takes over the color bar almost without personal feeling. It is due to the Southern ideology that he is driven to found his noble dynasty by maintaining racial hierarchy. His attitude toward the Negro child, Clytie becomes clear through the narration of Mr. Compson. Mr. Compson once casually lets fall the remark that

Sutpen's other children, "Henry and Judith had grown up with a negro half sister of their own" (315). The context of Mr. Compson's remarks makes it perfectly clear, that Henry and Judith were well aware that Clytie was indeed their half-sister, and that Clytie was allowed to grow up in the house with them. This fact in itself suggests a lack of the usual Southern feeling about Negroes.

After Sutpen has returned from the war, Clytie sits in the same room with Judith and Rosa and Sutpen listens each evening to the sound of Sutpen's voice. When Sutpen proposes to Rosa, he begins, "'Judith, you and Clytie and ceased, still entering, then said, 'No, never mind. Rosa will not mind if you both hear it too, since we are short for time'" (285). Clytie is accepted naturally as part of the "We" she can be so accepted because acceptance on this level does not imperil Sutpen's "design." But acceptance of Charter Bon, in Sutpen's opinion would. For Sutpen the matter is really as simple as that. He does not hate his first wife or feel repugnance for her child. He does not hate just as he does not love. This passion is totally committed to the "design."

Sutpen's gender discriminatory attitude can further be seen in his refusal to accept the new born female child from Milly whom he insults: "Well; Milly, too bad you are not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable (236). This becomes the most fatal mistake he has ever committed so far because Milly's grandfather kills Sutpen for insulting Milly.

The final description of Henry Sutpen who has grown old and is living at "Sutpen's Hundred" is important. Henry is being looked after by Clytie, a black girl of Sutpen born of a black servant. Clytie now lives with Juidth at "Sutpen's Hundred" they get along well with each other. They do not bear any grudges against each other on the ground of color. Rather they take in the son of Charles Bon and his Octoroon mistress. When their son, Charles Etienne Saint Valery Bon begets an idiot son, Judith and Clyties raise him secretly as well. The narrator, Quentin Compson mentions, "Clytie and Judith have managed to keep him concealed all the time. . . ." (166). This implies that racial harmony is indispensable for peace, prosperity and integrity of society. Moreover, it is ironic that Charles Bon's grandson, Jim bond, a Negro is left as a sole living heir to the "Sutpen's Hundred." Thomas Sutpen who has been denying black relationship in order to achieve his goal of establishing noble family dynasty ends up handing over "Sutpen's Hundred" to his Negro grandson for the continuity of his family dynasty. This implication of racial harmony and integration can be seen in the following narration:

At this time, while our country is struggling to rise from beneath the iron heel of a tyrant oppressor, when the very future of the south as a place bearable for our women and children to live in depends on the labor of tools which we have to use, to depend on are the pride and integrity and forbearance white; that you, I say, a white man, a white – and

your grandfather trying to reach him, stop him, trying to push through the crowd, saying, 'Jim, Jim, Jim.' (168)

This above mentioned narration suggests that racial equality helps people live in peace, unity and integrity. But, when Thomas Sutpen becomes prejudiced towards the blacks, he fails in his aim to create and maintain a noble family dynasty in the American South.

IV. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes with the findings that racial inequality is an impediment to peace, prosperity and integrity of person, family and society as a whole. Faulkner's protagonist, Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* who represents Southern aristocracy, suffers disintegration, and ultimately meets his tragic death because of his racial prejudice and intolerance.

Thomas Sutpen's perspectives regarding race and class are representative of those held by the South. Growing up as a child in a white trash family from West Virginia, he is unaware of the differences in social class and race in the beginning. He is quite innocent up to this point. But there comes a turning point in his life when Sutpen once goes to deliver a message from his father to the plantation owner. There he is not allowed to enter from the front door because of his low social standing. At this movement he realizes that not all people are the same, and this revelation changes the way that he views people and their race. In fact, Sutpen is of a lower socio-economic status than the black slaves who belong to the plantation owners. So, once he becomes aware of these differences, however, the actions of his life are put into motion towards its end. He loses his innocence in one crucial moment and his perspective of the world changes, just as the south was drawn away from its idealistic views. From that moment on, Sutpen becomes focused on maintaining racial prejudice in order to make sure that his dynasty would be perfect. His new way of thinking reflects the Southern ideal and perspective that white people are to be above blacks, especially in positions of power.

Sutpen, like most of the South, is obsessed with the idea of creating the ultimate Southern existence according to the design of the American dream. He rises from a life of poverty, working hard to acquire enough money to allow him to recreate himself, resettle, and start a new life. He becomes able to fulfill the Southern requirement of owning land, building an immense estate and marrying a Christian woman. He brings with him a lot of Negro servants to his "Sutpen's Hundred" and treats them inhumanely, putting them to fight for entertainment. His illusion of achieving high social status of aristocrat through the possession of the Negro servants to wait at the door of his 'grand house' reflects his biased and prejudiced nature towards the blacks. He thinks of blacks as lower human beings born to serve the whites. He denies the equal racial equality. He is unable to accept his own son, who is born to a partially black mother, because the son's mixed race does not fit into his plan for the ideal design of a Southerner. As a result, his grand design of establishing a noble family dynasty begins to crumble.

The decay of the house and Sutpen's ultimate demise as a result of the effect that his personal prejudice have on his ideal design cause long-lasting effects on the family including his offspring. Through his desire to have the perfect family, his rejection of his first born son, and his quest to have white male heirs to his estate, Sutpen destroys his design. In addition, he passes along his intolerance and refusal to accept blacks as equal to his son, Henry. Henry kills his older half brother, Charles Bon, and then flees to avoid punishment. Henry is unable to accept black as equals in the post-

war Southern society and in no way can he tolerate having a black man as a brother-in-law, even if he is a relative already. Thomas Sutpen later attempts to have another male heir to preserve his design, but when Millie, his mistress gives birth to a female child, his intolerance for deviance from his design cause him to reject both Millie and her child. This rejection leads to his ruin, as Millie's grandfather kills Sutpen because of his rejection of Millie. In the end his 'design' fails, and his only legacy in the world was that of a mentally retarded great grandson, Jim Bond, who was, ironically, part black. In this way, Sutpen's great design ends with his own tragic death due to his denial of racial equality. This shows how racial harmony and equal relationship is indispensable for the integrity of family and the society as a whole

Works Cited

- Alloport, G.W. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Boston: Adison-Wesley, 1954.
- Appich, Kwame Anthony. "Race." *Critical Terms for Literaty Study*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas Mclaughlin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Beavers, Herman. *Black American Literature*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Berry, B. *Race and Ethnic Relations*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958.
- Brooks, Cleanth. "History and the Sense of the Tragic: Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" *A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Robert Penn Warren. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: L of America, 1986.
- Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Vintage International, 1936.
- Feagin, Joe R., and Melvin P. Sikes. "The Continuing Significance of Racism." *Living with Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.
- Gerzina, Gretchen, "Racism": *The Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Gilroy, Paul. "The Whisper Wakes. 'The Shudder Plays': 'Race.' Nation and Ethnic Absolutism." *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Padmini Mongia. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Gwin, Minrose C. "Racial Wounding and the Aesthetics of the Middle Vo
cie in *Absalom Absalom!* *The Faulkner Journal*. Orlando. 20.2
(2004): 31 Pars 5, June 2006 <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb>>

- High, Peter B. *An Outline of American Literature*. London: Longman, 1997.
- Holman, C. Hugh. "Absalom, Abalom! The Historian as Detective." *Sewanee Review* LXXVI (Winter 1968): 543-552.
- Jones, Carolyn. *Race and Civilization*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Judith, Bryant Wittenberg. "Faulkner." *The Transfiguration of Biography*. University of Press, 1979.
- Kartgner, Donald M. "The Fragile Thread." *The Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Novels*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1978.
- Millgate, Michale. *William Faulkner*. Rev., ed. London: Oliver and bold, 1996. (53-59).
- O'Connor, William Van. *William Faulkner*. Minneapolis: Jones Press, 1959.
- Patricia, Tobin. "The Three of Myth and History in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *American Literature* Vol. XLL (1973): 252-271.
- Raily, Kevin. "Absalom, Absalom! and the Southern Ideology of Race. *The Faulkner Journal*. Orlando. 14.2 (1990): 31 Pars. 25 2006
<<http://proqjest.umi.com/pgdweb>>.
- Swiggart, Peter. *The Art of Faulkner's Novels*. Boston: Austin University Press, 1962. "A Puritan Tragedy: *Absalom, Absalom!*"
- Warren, Robert Penn. *Faulkner. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.