082. Rule of *solus ipse* in a Decaying World: Defying character of the American South in William Faulkner's *The Tall Men*

Yonca DENİZARSLANI[1]

APA: Denizarslanı, Y. (2023). Rule of *solus ipse* in a Decaying World: Defying character of the American South in William Faulkner's *The Tall Men*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (32), 1374-1386. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1253129.

Abstract

A trope for the mode of individual self-expression analogous of the regional character(s) of the American South in William Faulkner's short story, *The Tall Men* (1941), the rule of *solus ipse* corresponds to the state of individual in a fallen world of fears, anxieties, and uncertainties surmounted betwixt the World Wars. Binding Faulkner's characterization with his contemporaneous literary equivalents of the era, 'solipsism'[2] appeared as an existential niche of the defying character of the modern individual. As an epitome of devastated American South in successive periods of Reconstruction, progressive era and Great Depression, Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha, thus, both maps and transgresses the boundaries of his Southern stories to the extent his characters trespass the border between the individual and collective experience. Due to his joint literary appeal for gathering the local color with internationalism, studies on Faulkner's writing have given utmost emphasis on his legacy in Modernist literature. This article aims to bring forth the defying character(s) of the American South in William Faulkner's short story*, The Tall Men,* whose rule of *solus ipse* grounds the inbred resistance against the grain of the demise imposed by the Reconstruction and its succeeding era of progressivism and the Great Depression in American history.

Keywords: *Solus ipse* / Solipsism, William Faulkner, American South, reconstruction, Progressivism, Great Depression

Çürüyen Bir Dünyada *solus ipse* Kuralı: William Faulkner'ın *The Tall Men*' öyküsündeki Amerikan Güneyi'nin Başkaldıran Karakteri

Öz

William Faulkner'in *The Tall Men* (1941) adlı kısa öyküsünün yöresel karakterlerinin bireyci duruşuyla kimliklenmiş olan *solus ipse* kuralı, Dünya Savaşları arasında zirve yapmış korkular, kaygılar ve belirsizliklerin yarattığı düşmüş bir dünyanın kolektif sancısını taşıyan bireyin içkinliğine işaret etmektedir. Böylece, Faulkner'ın karakter yaratma tekniğini çağdaşları ile birleştiren "solipsizm" ("tekbencilik"), modern bireyin onu baskılayan ve kontrol edemediği kuvvetlere karşı duruşunu ifade eden bir tutum olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Faulkner, İç Savaş sonrası "Yeniden Kuruluş," "İlerleme Dönemi," ve Büyük Buhran'ın yıkıma uğrattığı Amerikan Güney'inin simgesi olarak yaratmış olduğu kurgusal Yoknapatawha ile yöresel gerçekçiliğin sınırlarını kolektif insan öyküleriyle buluşturmuştur. Yazarın bölgesel gerçekçiliğini uluslarası bağlamla bir araya getiren edebi tutumu

[1] Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Ege Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Bölümü (İzmir, Türkiye), yonca.denizarslani@ege.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3762-9553 [Araştırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 20.01.2023-kabul tarihi: 20.02.2023; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1253129]

[2] Craig, E. (1998). Solipsism. In The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved 26 Dec. 2022, from https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/solipsism/v-1. doi:10.4324/9780415249126-N097-1

sebebiyle Faulkner çalışmaları genellikle onun Modernist edebiyattaki yeri üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Bu çalışma, William Faulkner'ın *The Tall Men* adlı kısa öyküsünde, Amerikan tarihinin Büyük Buhran'ına öncül olan Yeniden Kuruluş ve İlerlemecilik dönemlerinin yıkıcı sonuçlarına karşı direnişinde kendisine *solus ipse* kaidesini temel alan Güney'inin asi karakterini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Solus ipse* / Solipsizm, William Faulkner, Güney Amerika, yeniden kuruluş, İlerlemecilik, Büyük Buhran

1. Introduction

Regarding the rule of *solus ipse*, on which this article grounds the breeding of the character/s of a peculiar region in mid-twentieth century America, William Faulkner's fictional realm of Yoknapatawpha stands as a solitary fable of the American South in its entirety, depicted through the historic and moral burdens of massive social and cultural changes. The publishing date of *The Tall Men* in 1941, is noteworthy for envisioning the American South in retrospective of the changes preceding the progressive era and Great Depression. While the enduring impact of social reforms enacted by the centralization of federal power at state and municipal administrations had groundbreaking consequences like Civil Rights Movement, labor movement and farm movement; industrialization and urbanization toppled down the ties with the old South. Hence, the economic reforms of the New Deal took their course investing upon 'the old dream of a New South,' federal intervention on the region's economy aroused the cynicism of the southerners, whose very essence of regional exceptionality dwelled on the old hierarchies such as white supremacy and the clan system of the rural South (Grantham, 1966: 228-229). Prevalence of kinship and blood related social stratum of the South was deeply rooted in racial conflicts; thus, the rhetorical symbiosis between blood and whiteness in Faulkner's fiction transgressed the class hierarchies of plantation elites, and white supremacists privileged poor whites over free blacks (Kirtunc, 1994:45). Following the Reconstruction, the immersion of black suffrage and employment into segregated social stratification of the South had devastating consequences. Whereas black suffrage enhanced the federal control at state level, free black labor deprived the plantation elites not only of their private properties but also of the surplus they had invested in their land ownership. In the aftermath of the Civil War, they became masters without slaves and lands. Lands that could not be farmed due to lack of slave labor turned the old plantation elites into prey in the hands of northern industrialists. On the other hand, emancipated blacks had to pay the price for their freedom. Without the protection of their masters' private property codes, their absorption into social spaces as equals to whites was unacceptable. Free blacks became an immediate target of violence by the white trash, whose inner hatred for labor competition with the recently freed millions of ex-slaves made them lenient to white supremacy, provincialism, and ignorance. Both urban and rural outlooks of the Reconstruction era were alike in the extreme waves of transformation. Old gentry replaced by the newly rich backwoods bourgeois; vast tracks of lands fallen into federal control; railroad construction and industrialization caused by the change of hands in ownership, all these massive turns had formerly created disorder and decadence, which had a lasting influence on the shaping of the peculiarities of distinct southern regions. Among William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels, *Sartoris* (1929), *Absolom, Absolom!* (1936), *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), and the triplet of *The Hamlet* (1940), *The Town* (1957), and *The Mansion* (1959) are the novels portraying these massive cultural changes in the American South. Faulkner's genealogies of regional characters evolve through the eras between the Reconstruction and Great Depression, and they are strikingly bound by the burdens of their family past and disintegrating conditions of the future generations. Bryant Edwards Trihey asserts that, as a native of Mississippi, Faulkner's ideological

perspective of the American South is divided between paternalism and liberalism. His advocacy to the sense of rootedness regarding the issues of morality and justice is disrupted by the corrupt family relations and mannerisms bringing the moral decay of the characters, undercurrent of which laid the power struggle among the old clans, the newly rich and the poor whites:

> Examining *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *The Hamlet* (1940) simultaneously, it is evident that Faulkner first feared the dissolution of an aristocracy grounded in paternalistic values and later the influx of poor whites - those whose power lies in their skin color and not in their moral righteousness, despite their monetary holdings. Faulkner was anxious about the potential for poor whites to hold positions of power and rule with no regard for responsibility, an attribute he associated with liberalism. Because of his placement among the conflicting ideologies of paternalism and liberalism, Faulkner's writing demonstrates his inclination towards the encouragement of earned social mobility with hesitation to allow those solely interested in monetary gains unchecked by a longstanding system of moral decency to acquire social, economic, or political power. (2)

To illuminate on Trihey's points on Faulkner's dilemma of paternalism versus liberalism in his fiction, Numan V. Bartley's survey of the recently emerging research on southern history underpins a special focus on the class relations in the post-Reconstruction era:

> The experiences of other plantation societies have suggested new approaches to the study of southern history, and, following a decade of lavish attention to slavery and the antebellum South, researchers have extended their interests into the post-Reconstruction era. As with the study of slavery and the Old South, class, labor, and race relations and their ideological manifestations have been central points of concern. Generally, recent literature has tended to stress the distinctiveness of southern society rather than its similarity with the states to the north, and in varying degrees has emphasized continuity from the Old South to the New rather than change. The trend seems clearly away from "psychological" explanations for southern political behavior-mythology, romanticism, separate and nationally unique historical experiences, individual and psychological racism, and the like. Instead, recent studies, which have often been Marxist or quasi-Marxist in orientation, have tended to link the attitudes and ideologies of social groups to the labor system, social structure, economic organization, and class relationships in the region. (Bartley, 1982:151)

Bartley's remarks on the new approaches to southern history underline a continuity rather than a break with the Old South. Even though new economic relations failed to support the old ways, the dramatic break persisted as the ideological codes of behavior endured, putting their stamp on the New South. Thus, Bartley's reference to Eugene D. Genovese's emphasis on the lack of market economy in the Old South is noteworthy as it evidences the regional differences between the North and the South, laying the cultural foundations of resistance for change:

> Although a part of the world capitalist economy, the South, according to Genovese, "did not have an essentially market society" and consequently was basically different from the increasingly laissez-faire society of northern states. The pre-bourgeois southern planter class espoused an ideology of paternalism that bore little resemblance to the free labor ideology popular among northern elites. (Bartley, 1982:151)

Moreover, in his *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935), W.E.B. Du Bois argued that the correlation between private ownership and political enfranchisement was a determinant factor for a lack of labor-based class consciousness in the U.S. as each newcomer from Europe was offered equal opportunity for land ownership and the promise of *rags to riches*. Hence, Du Bois asserted that both North and South lacked a long-standing organized labor movement, which latent the establishment of unions in America. Accordingly, while the southern planter class was confronted with newly rich bourgeois; free black labor confronted with great waves of free white labor, both parties enduring the labor competition in laissez-faire capitalism (Du Bois, 1935: 17-18). Max Weber as well correlates

paternalism in American experience of modern capitalism to the Protestant ethic of *the elect*, which according to him, was later unpredictably engaged to the success myth (1992:121-2):

> Now naturally the whole ascetic literature of almost all denominations is saturated with the idea that faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God. In this respect Protestant Asceticism added in itself nothing new. But it not only deepened this idea most powerfully, it also created the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness: the psychological sanction of it through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace. And on the other hand it legalized the exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it also interpreted the employer's business activity as a calling. It is obvious how powerfully the exclusive search for the Kingdom of God only through the fulfilment of duty in the calling, and the strict asceticism which Church discipline naturally imposed, especially on the propertyless classes, was bound to affect the productivity of labour in the capitalistic sense of the word. The treatment of labour as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the business man. It was a perception of this situation, new at his time, which caused so able an observer as Sir William Petty to attribute the economic power of Holland in the seventeenth century to the fact that the very numerous dissenters in that country (Calvinists and Baptists) "are for the most part thinking, sober men, and such as believe that Labour and Industry is their duty towards God." (121-2)

Regarding these common underlying economic foundations, indeed, the North and South shared common aspects for a broader reading of the cultural history of labor and the capital in the U.S. Closely knit into power relations and labor struggles Faulkner observed in mid-twentieth century American South, most of his writing is engaged with the themes of freedom versus authority and individualism from a viewpoint of a peculiar moral vision. In his 1955 article, "On Privacy / the American Dream: what happened to it," William Faulkner strikes back against the overwhelming pressures on individual freedoms posed by post-1945 environment of American domestic politics. Annoyed by the American journalists' urge for writing about him at the expense of trespassing his privacy following his worldwide literary fame with his 1951 Nobel Prize, Faulkner's resentment against the materialism and totalizing spirit of post-1945 American society illuminates his moral vision of the American Dream and individualism:

> The American sky which was once the topless empyrean of freedom, the American air which was once the living breath of liberty, are now become one vast down-crowding pressure to abolish them both, by destroying man's individuality as a man by (in that turn) destroying the last vestige of privacy without which man cannot be an individual.
>
> . . .
>
> With odds at balance' (plus a little fast footwork now and then of course) one individual can defend himself from another individual's liberty. But when powerful federations and organizations and amalgamations like publishing corporations and religious sects and political parties and legislative committees can absolve even one of their working units of the restrictions of moral responsibility by means of such catch-phrases as "Freedom" and "Salvation" and "Security" and "Democracy," beneath which blanket absolution the individual salaried practitioners are themselves freed of individual responsibility and restraint, then let us beware. (1955:37)

At a chance to strike back against the downgrading forces on individuals, exerted not only by the government but also by social environments created by Roosevelt's New Deals and McCarthyism era, Faulkner's Nobel speech is a sound manifesto for the loss of individual freedoms and the fear disseminated by the oppressive air of his era:

> Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear, so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only one question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man, young 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 lucking -- lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed -- love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he lives 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 releases -- 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 still 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.

Receiving the Noel Prize following the devastation of World War II and suspicious of the quiescent social environments of the Cold War era, Faulkner recalled the spirit of individualism for rebuilding civilization. His utmost emphasis on the young generation to whom he appealed in his speech is noteworthy to the extent we consider his priority for creating a genealogy of young protagonists in all sums of his novels and short stories. Edmond L. Volpe offers a special emphasis on Faulkner's young protagonists, who play a central role for the display of the Southern drama of familial relations: "In novel after novel he returns to the theme, and it is possible to trace the development of his ideas and the alterations of his moods and attitudes by examining the experiences of his young heroes" (1964:17). Besides Faulkner's lineage to his young protagonists, Volpe underlines that,

> Born in the South just before the turn of the century, they are oriented during childhood toward the past, toward a mid-nineteenth century world. Unfortunately for them, they come to maturity in the twentieth century. Secondly, like their literary contemporaries, the young heroes of Hemingway and Dos Passos, they are both idealists and puritans. Finally, they are intelligent, sensitive, and introspective. When these young men collide with the reality of the twentieth-century existence, they are shocked, outraged, and confused. Faulkner's novels combine the Bildungsroman family saga. The young hero's simultaneous rebellion from the family traditions and his intense need for the security that the family provides produce much of the tension in the novels. (1964:18)

Alongside with his band of young protagonists' display of a solid sense of singular stance against the totalizing forces of both the familial bonds and the social codes, Faulkner's depiction of his fictional Yoknapatawpha region almost as a singular character, composed of a mold the author had constructed with his range of stories and characters, is as striking as his rebellious young heroes. According to Ward Miner, Yoknapatawpha is derived from two Chickasaw words, 'Yocana' and 'petopha' meaning 'split land.' Originally belonged to a tribe of Chickasaw Indians in early 1800 and inhabited by a few earlier pioneers of European descent, Faulkner's essential band of Yoknapatawpha pioneers begin to appear in 1833 with the arrival of Thomas Sutpen, Lucuius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Jason Lycurgus Compson, De Spain and Stevens, most of whom have migrated and built their own replica of plantation society they admired from Southeastern states, where opportunities for land ownership and high social stance were scarce in the Antebellum America (Volpe, 1964:14-15). Following these forerunners of plantation elites, a new clan of newly rich like Will Valner and his successor Flem Snopes appeared in the region with the economic and social conditions in the New South. All in all, "Like Mississippi itself, Yoknapatawpha is a land of clawed poverty, and while it does have social classes, they are either vestigial or embryonic remnants of the old aristocracy or forerunners of a new commercial ruling class. . . . , but the bulk of Yoknapatawpha is made up of hardworking farmers beneath whom hangs a fringe of 'poor whites'" (Howe, 1991:8). Thus, this peculiar fabric of the region prevails all throughout the changing social conditions depicted in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha related stories and characters. Inbred within

and among the traumatized generations of elder Civil War and World War veterans; wounded with moral decadence of provincialism and paternalism, Faulkner's protagonist(s) of Yoknapatawpha prevails amid the overwhelming forces of modernization and industrialization at the turn of the twentieth century. The description of Frenchman's Bend in the opening of the first book of *The Hamlet* (1940) impresses the reader not just as a haunting place but that of a resurrected one:

> Frenchman's Bend was a section of rich river-bottom country lying twenty miles southeast of Jefferson. Hill-cradled and remote, definite yet without boundaries, straddling into two counties and owning allegiance to neither, it had been the original grant and site of a tremendous pre-Civil War plantation, the ruins of which--the gutted shell of an enormous house with its fallen stables and slave quarters and overgrown gardens and brick terraces and promenades--were still known as the Old Frenchman's place, although the original boundaries now existed only on old faded records in the Chancery Clerk's office in the county courthouse in Jefferson, and even some of the once fertile fields had long since reverted to the cane-and-cypress jungle from which their first master had hewed them.

Now at the possession of the newly rich backwoods bourgeois Will Varner, Frenchman's Bend revives both in the regional memory and its current wild, untamed, and unattended state as a reminiscent of its earliest pioneer days while still waiting for the next generation of dramas to attend its regional doom. This correlation between the place and its impact on the psychological state of the characters is ultimately achieved with Faulkner's impressionist ending description of the first book of *The Hamlet*, when Jody Varner is desperately riding back from his sinister visit to the Snopes, having already realized his total financial loss and psychological defeat:

> Two miles further on dusk overtook him, the shortening twilight of late April, in which the blanched dogwoods stood among the darker trees with spread raised palms like praying nuns; there was the evening star and already the whippoor-wills.' The horse, travelling supperward, was going well in the evening's cool, when Varner pulled it to a stop and held it for a full moment. "Hell fire," he said. "He was standing just exactly where couldn't nobody see him from the house."

Having focused on the regional distinctiveness and solitary attributes of his characterization related to the themes of freedom versus authority and individualism, following analysis of Faulkner's *The Tall Men* and will display the extent the modernist niche of *solus ipse* counts for the inbred defying mode of the American South.

2. Freedom versus Authority at Odds with Ambivalent Power Relations, Regional Rule of *solus ipse* in *The Tall Men*

The publishing year of William Faulkner's short story "The Tall Men," 1941 corresponds to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's enactment of peacetime draft on September 16, 1940, which demanded all men between 21 and 35 to register with their local draft boards. The story starts with the arrival of the state draft investigator, Mr. Pearson, as 'a stranger' from Jackson and the old marshal of the town, Mr. Gombault at the McCallum farm, looking for Buddy McCallum's boys Anse and Lucius, who have been absent from the service list. The descendants of the earlier generation of Scotch-Irish McCallum family in *Flags in the Dust*, Buddy McCallum's sons, Anse and Lucius at first appear as mere trespassers of the government's regulation from the viewpoint of the draft investigator. In regard with government's charge of the McCallum boys, Faulkner brings forth the issue of disparity and injustice grounding the relationship between individual and authority by questioning how, from government's perspective, individuals, and their desolate communities, as that of the McCallums' are unjustly prejudiced regardless of the living conditions of both their private and remote regional lives. Thus, along with the 1940 enactment of the peacetime draft, Roosevelt's 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act for the regulation of farm surpluses is also judged in the story by the old Marshal Mr. Gombault. The hardboiled issue of

freedom versus authority revives in the collective story of McCallums, whose old generations had already fought for their own freedoms and nation during the Civil War and World War I, having had survived through the governmental regulations at the same time in the era of Great Depression. Stunningly, Faulkner's characterization of the two young McCallum boys, Anse and Lucius, does not show any remarkable individuality. They are heard only twice throughout the story replying to their father Buddy McCallum all together saying, "Yes father," when he tells them to go to Memphis and get enlisted immediately. We do not get a sense that they had deliberately escaped the draft:

> "Anse, Lucius," he said.
>
> To the investigator it sounded as if they answered as one, "Yes, father." "This gentleman has come all the way from Jackson to say the Government is ready for you. I reckon the quickest place to enlist will be Memphis. Go upstairs and pack."

Hence, neither the father figure Buddy McCallum's nor his boys' motivation is portrayed as mere anarchism; indeed, through the narration and point of view of the old marshal Mr. Gombault the story takes on a different path and sounds quite patriotic with the retelling of the legendary war stories of older McCallum men, who were the veterans of both the Civil War and World War I. However, Faulkner strikes the reader with the father's upright self-esteemed individuality when he advises his sons when to obey and disobey:

> ". . . The Government done right by me in my day, and it will do right by you. You just enlist wherever they want to send you, need you, and obey your sergeants and officers until you find out how to be soldiers. Obey them but remember your name and don't take nothing from no man. You can go now."

Following the path of their elders, Anse and Lucius McCallum would not act against government; and their obedience to authority represents their coming to terms with the legal sense of citizenship at the expense of their freedoms to preserve their private existence, which found utmost expression with their father's advice "Obey them but remember your name . . ." The rule of *solus ipse* and individuality of Anse and Lucius is, thus, identified with their sense of belonging to their ancestral and communal lineage, which was achieved by hard labor, devotion and generosity to the family, community, and the nation. Regarding this peculiar sense of individuality and the rule of *solus ipse*, Faulkner advocates McCallums' self-righteous causes for disobeying Roosevelt's 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act through the old Marsal's report to the draft investigator:

> "That was after Buddy and them had quit raising cotton. I remember that too. It was when the Government first begun to interfere with how a man farmed his own land, raised his cotton. Stabilizing the price, using up the surplus, they called it, giving a man advice and help, whether he wanted it or not. You may have noticed them boys in yonder tonight; curious folks almost, you might call them. That first year, when county agents was trying to explain the new system to farmers, the agent come out here and tried to explain it to Buddy and Lee and Stuart, explaining how they would cut down the crop, but that the Government would pay farmers the difference, and so they would actually be better off than trying to farm by themselves.
>
> "'Why, we're much obliged,' Buddy says. 'But we don't need no help. We'll just make the cotton like we always done; if we can't make a crop of it, that will just be our lookout and our loss, and we'll try again.'
>
> "So they wouldn't sign no papers nor no cards nor nothing. They just went on and made the cotton like old Anse had taught them to; it was like they just couldn't believe that the Government aimed to help a man whether he wanted help or not, aimed to interfere with how much of anything he could make by hard work on his own land, making the crop and ginning it right here in their own gin, like they had always done, and hauling it to town to sell, hauling it all the way into Jefferson before they found out they couldn't sell it because, in the first place, they had made too much of it and, in the second place, they never had no card to sell what they would have been allowed. So they hauled it back. The gin wouldn't hold all of it, so they put some of it under Rafe's mule shed and they put the

> rest of it right here in the hall where we are setting now, where they would have to walk around it all winter and keep themselves reminded to be sho and fill out that card next time.

Through the old Marshal's narration of McCallums' disobedience to Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Act, in the above passage, Faulkner highlights both the individual and communal stance against the violation of private property and surplus of the small farmers. McCallums were supported by their neighboring farmers who helped them stock their surplus cotton. Appreciating the farmers' solidarity, indeed, Faulkner is impatient because the burden of the economic crises has always been laid upon the individuals, be it the small farmers, or individual urban manufacturers and factory laborers who had to suffer the greed of the corporate business clans which had bloomed within the Reconstruction and progressive era in the United States. In his 2006 book, *American Reformers, 1870-1920: Progressives in Word and Deed*, Steven L. Piott highlighted the inadequacy of the federal regulatory agencies and legislations such as the Interstate Commerce Commission (1887) and the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) aiming to protect competition amidst corporate business clans at the turn of the century: "Although the growth of large-scale industrial capitalism contributed substantially to the nations' economic growth, it also triggered a heated debate over the implications of rising corporate power not just on the economy but on the political system as well" (2006:2). Piott's focus extends beyond the urban conditions; similar to individual wage laborers and manufacturers, farmers had to adapt their means of production and calculate their surpluses in accord with the giants of industrialization:

> The World of the farmer changed with that of the industrial worker. As transportation facilitated access to the growing market economy, farmers increasingly specialized. Farmers on the Great Plains grew wheat, Midwesterners raised cotton, and southerners continued to cultivate cotton. As farmers specialized in cash crops, they become increasingly dependent on others. Bankers controlled access to credit, buyers dictated prices, and railroads set the transportation rates on goods being sent to market. In the more geographically isolated South, small farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers found themselves buying supplies on credit from "furnishing merchants" at exorbitant interest charges so that they could plan next year's crop and support their families until harvest time. Under this system, merchants dictated the nature of a farmer's crop, demanded that he not incur financial obligations from another merchant, and required him to sign a lien on his future crop a collateral. When farmers sold their crops, they most found that they had not earned enough to pay off the merchant. As a result, the struggling farmer often found himself trapped in an ever-ending cycle of debt peonage. (2006:3)

Regarding this economic outlook of the preceding progressive era and the overwhelming pressures on the hard labor of farming at the time of New Deal generation of McCallums, Faulkner places "the dark bulk of the cotton gin" at the threshold of his story, when the old deputy town marshal, Mr. Gamboult and his accompanying draft investigator Mr. Pearson from Jackson arrive at the McCallum farm:

> They passed the dark bulk of the cotton gin. Then they saw the lamplit house and the other car, the doctor's coupe, just stopping at the gate, and they could hear the hound baying.

Soon after this prelude, they notice Doctor Schofield's car parked outside, whom the marshal has called for an emergency. Buddy McCallum's leg was fatally wounded by an accident at the cotton gin. Striking against the fact that he has informed the McCallums of his arrival to arrest the boys, the investigator blames the old Marshal for betraying the government:

> "What's that other car?" the younger man said, the stranger, the state draft investigator.
>
> "Doctor Schofield's," the marshal said. "Lee McCallum asked me to send him out when I telephoned, we were coming."
>
> "You mean you warned them?" the investigator said. "You telephoned ahead that I was coming out with a warrant for these two evaders? Is this how you carry out the orders of the United States Government?"

Right after this dialogue Faulkner describes the old marshal as follows: “The marshal was a lean, clean old man who chewed tobacco, who had been born and lived in the county all his life.” From the very beginning, thus, the reader is introduced to in-group versus out-group confrontation between the old deputy marshal and the young state draft investigator; whereas the sole mission to be there for the latter is to arrest the McCallum boys, priority of the former is to help the injury Buddy McCallum suffers from his accident at the cotton gin. The two opponent authority figures clash as the young draft investigator criticizes the old deputy marshal for informing the McCallum family of their arrival:

> "I understood all you wanted was to arrest these two McCallum boys and bring them back to town," he said. "It was!" the investigator said. "And now you have warned them, given them a chance to run. Possibly put the Government to the expense of hunting them down with troops. Have you forgotten that you are under a bond yourself?" "I ain't forgot it," the marshal said. "

Nevertheless, despite his reaction against the old marshal, the young investigator lowers his tone and eventually evades speaking his thoughts aloud and prefers to keep silent feeling himself as an intruder among closely knit band of farmers and town’s figures including the old marshal and town doctor at the McCallum house:

> The investigator drew up behind the other car and switched off and blacked out his lights. "These people," he said. Then he thought, But this doddering, tobacco-chewing old man is one of them, too, despite the honor and pride of his office, which should have made him different. So he didn't speak it aloud, removing the keys and getting out of the car, and then locking the car itself, rolling the windows up first, thinking, These people who lie about and conceal the ownership of land and property in order to hold relief jobs which they have no intention of performing, standing on their constitutional rights against having to work, who jeopardize the very job itself through petty and transparent subterfuge to acquire a free mattress which they intend to attempt to sell; who would relinquish even the job, if by so doing they could receive free food and a place, any rathole, in town to sleep in; who, as farmers, make false statements to get seed loans which they will later misuse, and then react in loud vituperative outrage and astonishment when caught at it. And then, when at long last a suffering and threatened Government asks one thing of them in return, one thing simply, which is to put their names down on a selective-service list, they refuse to do it.

His head wrapped up with his judgmental perspective against the boys, the family itself and the whole rural community of Jefferson in the name of the McCallums, the investigator penetrates the story. The description of the rural figures surrounding Buddy McCallum’s supine body inside the house, however, raises the tension of the investigator and heightens his sense of being an outsider among the strongly knit kinship:

> The doddering old officer was not only at bottom one of these people, he had apparently been corrupted anew to his old, inherent, shiftless sloth and unreliability merely by entering the house. So he followed in turn, down the hall and into a bedroom; whereupon he looked about him not only with amazement but with something very like terror. The room was a big room, with a bare unpainted floor, and besides the bed, it contained only a chair or two and one other piece of old-fashioned furniture. Yet to the investigator it seemed so filled with tremendous men cast in the same mold as the man who had met them that the very walls themselves must bulge. Yet they were not big, not tall, and it was not vitality, exuberance, because they made no sound, merely looking quietly at him where he stood in the door, with faces bearing an almost identical stamp of kinship: a thin, almost frail old man of about seventy, slightly taller than the others; a second one, white-haired, too, but otherwise identical with the man who had met them at the door; a third one about the same age as the man who had met them, but with something delicate in his face and something tragic and dark and wild in the same dark eyes; the two absolutely identical blue-eyed youths; and lastly the blue-eyed man on the bed over which the doctor, who might have been any city doctor, in his neat city suit, leaned: all of them turning to look quietly at him and the marshal as they entered.

Despite his unquestionable governmental authority and his impatient inhumanity that stick his mind to catch the train to Jackson after arresting the boys, the investigator understands that he must wait until

the doctor amputates Buddy McCallum's injured leg. Thus, besides the loss of humanity, Faulkner awakens us modern readers to another loss, which is identified with the sense of time, the prolonged dramatic break of modernity that have been problematizing our relationship with humanity and life itself. In a likely manner with the investigator Mr. Pearson, the readers of Faulkner must stop a while and listen to the realities of insignificant rural people whose depravity of basic constitutional rights of life and private ownership mattered at the expense of their hard labor which is violently epitomized with the Buddy McCallum's amputated leg. Eventually, "The dark bulk of the cotton gin" stands as an archangel of a fallen paradise, unlocking the tale of McCallum only to those with a sensitive ear. Buddy McCallum's rule of *solus ipse* and his strong character is expressed both with his sound and clear command of his boys' obedience to laws on the condition of remembering who they are and his endurance to the pain of his leg amputating operation without being etherized. His endurance is a seasoned one indeed, having survived his fatal wound in France in World War I and his continued hard labor on his own land all throughout his life:

> "One day in France we was running through a wheat field and I saw the machine gun, coming across the wheat, and I tried to jump it like you would jump a fence rail somebody was swinging at your middle, only I never made it. And I was on the ground then, and along toward dark that begun to hurt, only about that time something went whang on the back of my helmet, like when you hit a anvil, so I never knowed nothing else until I woke up. There was a heap of us racked up along a bank outside a field dressing station, only it took a long time for the doctor to get around to all of us, and by that time it was hurting bad. This here ain't hurt none to speak of since I got a-holt of this johnny-jug. You go on and finish it. If it's help you need, Stuart and Rafe will help you... Pour me a drink, Jackson."

Having heard of the whole sum of the McCallum story, at the end, the investigator finds himself accompanying the old marshal carrying the amputated leg of Buddy McCallum to the family grave, where old Anse McCallum and Mrs. McCallum and Buddy's wife were buried. Following the orders of the old Marshal through their stride toward the family plot, the draft investigator yields:

> The investigator followed him out of the house and across the yard, carrying gingerly the bloody, shattered, heavy bundle in which it still seemed to him he could feel some warmth of life, the marshal striding on ahead, the lantern swinging against his leg, the shadow of his striding scissoring and enormous along the earth, his voice still coming back over his shoulder, chatty and cheerful, . . .

The mood of the investigator carrying Buddy's amputated leg, which "still seemed to him he could feel some warmth of life" appears as one of the most gothic expressions in Faulkner's writing. The dreadful imagery of the investigator, representative of the ruling authority of the government, holding the funeral of Buddy McCallum's sacrificed leg to hard labor evokes an emblem of courage and patriotism on the part of both sides of the opponents. The character of the investigator develops, and is matured having realized that Buddy McCallum's amputated leg with 'warmth of life' was honorable as much of his two medals, ". . . an American medal and a French one, . . ." he brought from World War I. As the "spittin' image of old Anse McCallum," who had also served during the Civil War and strived to build his family and farm despite the hardships of the Reconstruction and the progressive era, Buddy McCallum had done his best to preserve the family heritage dwelling on the rule of *solus ipse* even if it required disobeying the government by his constant labor and will to resist the overwhelming forces of wild capitalism. Lastly, the epitaphic comments of the old Marshal while digging the grave for Buddy's leg sounds as a denouement to the tale itself:

> "Yes, sir. A man gets around and he sees a heap; a heap of folks in a heap of situations. The trouble is, we done got into the habit of confusing the situations with the folks. Take yourself, now," he said in that same kindly tone, chatty and easy; "you mean all right. You just went and got yourself all fogged up with rules and regulations. That's our trouble. We done invented ourselves so many alphabets and rules and recipes that we can't see anything else; if what we see can't be fitted to an

> alphabet or a rule, we are lost. We have come to be like critters doctor folks might have created in laboratories, that have learned how to slip off their bones and guts and still live, still be kept alive indefinite and forever maybe even without even knowing the bones and the guts are gone. We have slipped our backbone; we have about decided a man don't need a backbone any more; to have one is old-fashioned. But the groove where the backbone used to be is still there, and the backbone has been kept alive, too, and someday we're going to slip back onto it. I don't know just when nor just how much of a wrench it will take to teach us, but someday."

The old marshal questions the disparity between the legal foundations of American democracy and the real human experience with it, which indeed was the ground of the protest culture of the Revolutionary America. The burden of colonial America was once challenged by the mindset of the Age of Reason which formed the underlying rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, according to the old Marshal, the New Deal party-line bureaucracy of the draft investigator is insufficient to understand the situation of the McCallums: "We done invented ourselves so many alphabets and rules and recipes that we can't see anything else; if what we see can't be fitted to an alphabet or a rule, we are lost." Reviving the "backbone" of American democracy that is its human aspect, the old Marshall emotionally baptizes the draft investigator and awakes his common sense:

> Life's a pretty durn valuable thing. I don't mean just getting along from one WPA relief check to the next one, but honor and pride and discipline that make a man worth preserving, make him of any value. That's what we got to learn again. Maybe it takes trouble, bad trouble, to teach it back to us; maybe it was the walking to Virginia because that's where his ma come from, and losing a war and then walking back, that taught it to old Anse. Anyway, he seems to learned it, and to learned it good enough to bequeath it to his boys. Did you notice how all Buddy had to do was to tell them boys of his it was time to go, because the Government had sent them word? And how they told him good-by? Growned men kissing one another without hiding and without shame. Maybe that's what I am trying to say... There." he said. "That's big enough." He moved quickly, easily; before the investigator could stir, he had lifted the bundle into the narrow trench and was covering it, covering it as rapidly as he had dug, smoothing the earth over it with the shovel. Then he stood up and raised the lantern a tall, lean old man, breathing easily and lightly. "I reckon we can go back to town now," he said.

In her article, "Beyond the Old Marshal: 'Patriotic Nonsense,' the Vernacular Cosmopolitan, and Faulkner's Fiction of the early 1940s," Theresa M. Towner argues the validity of ideological patriotism under the light of contemporary critical response to ideology by Terry Eagleton and Homi Bhabha. According to Towner, William Faulkner's attempt to offer a multifaceted perception of patriotism resolves the dilemma between the individual and society. Rather than a dichotomous relationship, Faulkner's advocacy to human conduct is of paramount importance:

> . . . Faulkner introduces into his fiction the idea that a legitimate ideology of patriotism might be possible – that love of country might work analogously to love of family and might translate into a love of nation and action on behalf of that nation. Such action might mean enlistment and service in the military. Such action might include traveling into another social realm and standing among strangers and either teaching them something, . . ., or learning something from them, as the investigator does from the old marshal. Such action would almost necessarily move the actor beyond what he or she previously knew or believed, . . . (Towner, 2005: 104)

3. Conclusion

In an era of totalizing waves of nationalism worldwide, William Faulkner's *The Tall Men* brings forth an idealized sense of patriotism with an appeal to question the power relations. As representatives of government authority, the disparity between the local marshal Mr. Gamboult and the draft investigator Mr. Pearson prevails all throughout the story. The detached and indifferent attitude of the investigator symbolizes the remoteness of the government and legislative branches, whereas the old marshal Mr. Gamboult appears as an insider with his native attachment to the town people. Nevertheless, both are

initially "the tall men," government's outstretched hand upon people no matter how far away they live on their own realities. Upon his entrance to the McCallums' household, the investigator's description of the rural people underlines their inferiority to authority: "Yet they were not big, not tall, and it was not vitality, exuberance, because they made no sound, merely looking quietly at him where he stood in the door, with faces bearing an almost identical stamp of kinship: a thin, almost frail old man of about seventy, slightly taller than the others . . ." On the other hand, soon after his penetration into this alien world, he realizes that his arrogance deludes his perception. He, himself and all the affiliations evoked within his identity become inferior to the individual power of old marshal and McCallums with their human conduct raised by solidarity and devotion to community. Thus, while Faulkner's fictional realm of Yoknapatawpha unravels the social realities of 1930s and 1940s, his emphasis on the collective drama of humanity offers a healing process when the old marshal "stood up and raised the lantern a tall, lean old man, breathing easily and lightly" having had buried the amputated leg of Buddy to the McCallum family plot. As Walton Litz explores in his "William Faulkner's Moral Vision,"

> Man's freedom is an inner, moral one. It is his responsibility to endure and attempt to expiate the evils which he inherits from the past. Then, secure in the knowledge that this free choice will improve the lives of succeeding generations, he will be able to reconcile himself to his fate and prevail over it. The virtues demanded by history, the moral responsibilities which every man has the power to visualize, derive from an ideal harmony between man and nature. They are made explicit in Faulkner's description of the original covenant between man and God in Paradise. (1952:201)

Eventually, peculiar to Faulkner's solipsistic niche of Yoknapatawpha, the rule of *solus ipse* counts for the McCallums and the heroic old marshal Mr. Gamboult, whose will for preserving individual sovereignty is knit together within their community related survival amidst overwhelming forces in a dangling world. Thus, somewhere in-between Georg Lukacs's critical response to self-alienated particularity of Kierkegaardian existentialism and the historical sense of 1940s' social realism, William Faulkner's *The Tall Men* has still so much to say to todays' literary responses to the loss of individualism. His characters' solid expression of individualism grounded on American Dream of individual rights and freedoms corresponds to Kierkegaard's assertion on the sovereignty of individual against the stipulating forces of society. On the other hand, McCallums and their community-related solidarity display the rule of *solus ipse* against the overwhelming demands of government in the era of Great Depression, through which they had to bear the burdens and devastating consequences of corporate business of progressive era. Thus, regarding the regional-specific economic conditions during Great Depression, with his *The Tall Men,* Faulkner offers a social realist response to 1940's American society in reminiscence of American Dream of individualism.

4. References

Bartley, Numan V. (1982). "In Search of the New South: Southern Politics after Reconstruction." *Reviews in American History*. *The Promise of American History: Progress and Prospects*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Vol. 10, No. 4, (150-163). Retrieved on 26 Dec 2022, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/2701824

Craig, E. (1998). "Solipsism." *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved on 26 Dec 2022, from https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/solipsism/v-1. Doi: 10.4324/9780415249126-N097-1

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1995). *Black Reconstruction in America*. Simon & Schuster.

Faulkner, W. (1951). The Nobel Prize Speech. Retrieved on 20 Dec. 2022 from William Faulkner - Banquet speech (nobelprize.org)

Faulkner, W. (1955). "ON PRIVACY the American Dream: what happened to it." *Harper's Magazine*. (33-38) Retrieved on 10 Dec. 2022, from on-privacy-by-faulkner-harpers.pdf (typepad.com)

Faulkner, W. (1940). *The Hamlet*. Retrieved on 18 Nov 2022, from William Faulkner, The Hamlet (wordpress.com)

Faulkner, W. (1941). *The Tall Men*. Retrieved on 21 Oct 2022, from WILLIAM FAULKNER, The Tall Men (wordpress.com)

Grantham, D. W. (1966). "The South and the Reconstruction of American Politics." *The Journal of American History*. Oxford University Press on behalf of Organization of American Historians. Vol. 53, No. 2 (227-246). Retrieved on 26 Dec 2022 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/18941

Howe, I. (1991). *William Faulkner A Critical Study*. Ivan R. D. Publisher.

Kırtunc, Lahur, A. (1994). "William Faulkner'ın Eserlerinde Başlıca Güney Temaları." *Aegean Journal of English and American Studies*. Ege University Press. Sayı 10. (43-66).

Litz, W. (1952). "William Faulkner's Moral Vision." *Southwest Review*. Southern Methodist UniversityPress. Vol. 37, No. 3. (200-209). Retrieved on 06 Jan 2023 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/43463794

Piott, S.L. (2006). *American Reformers, 1870 – 1920: Progressives in Word and Deed*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Towner, T. M. (2005). Beyond the old marshal:" patriotic nonsense," the vernacular cosmopolitan, and Faulkner's fiction of the early 1940s. *The Faulkner Journal*. The John Hopkins University Press. Vol. 21 No. 1 / 2 . 91-106. Retrieved on 19 Jan 2023 from Beyond The Old Marshal: "Patriotic Nonsense," the Vernacular Cosmopolitan, And Faulkner's Fiction of the Early 1940s (jstor.org)

Trihey, B. E. (2011). *The Invisible Other: White Trash in William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and The Hamlet*. Dissertation. Theses, Dissertations & Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Longwood University. Retrieved on 07 Dec 2022 from https://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/etd

Weber, M. (1992). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Routledge. Retrieved on 04 Jan 2023 From *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (wordpress.com)

Volpe, E. (1964). *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.