

**PRIDE AND AMBITION AS HINDRANCES TO INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY: A  
READING OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!***

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**Abstract :** This work highlights pride and excessive ambition as hindrances to social stability, particularly in the context of individual liberty as portrayed in the fictional world of William Faulkner. Individual liberty is one of the most commonly shared values by people all over the world. When this individual liberty with regard to pride is squared with excessive ambition, it often brings about contempt, humiliation and loss of power. It also imperils the social fabric which compels human beings to live at the edge of the society. Through the lenses of Cultural Theory, the paper first analyses the actions and reactions of the characters in William Faulkner's novel in the framework of individual liberty. It equally discusses the negative repercussions of excessive pride with regard to the characters. The study finds that enjoying individual liberty at the expense of the rights of other human beings causes confusion and instability to the stakeholder. It also shows that moral depravity results from the neglect of others who are considered less human beings.

**Keywords:** ambition, contempt, liberty, power, pride

**L'ORGUEIL ET L'AMBITION COMME OBSTACLES À LA LIBERTÉ  
INDIVIDUELLE : UNE LECTURE DE *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!* DE WILLIAM  
FAULKNER**

**Résumé :** Cet article met en évidence l'orgueil et l'ambition démesurée comme obstacles à la stabilité sociale, en particulier dans le contexte de la liberté individuelle telle qu'elle est dépeinte dans l'univers fictif de William Faulkner. Cette liberté individuelle est l'une des valeurs les plus communément partagées par les peuples du monde entier. Lorsque la liberté individuelle, en ce qui concerne l'orgueil, est confrontée à une ambition excessive, elle entraîne souvent le mépris, l'humiliation et la perte de pouvoir. Elle met également en péril le tissu social qui oblige les êtres humains à vivre en marge de la société. Sous le prisme de la théorie culturelle, cet article analyse d'abord les actions et les réactions des personnages du roman de William Faulkner dans le cadre de la liberté individuelle. Il examine également les répercussions négatives d'un orgueil excessif sur les personnages. L'étude trouve que la jouissance de la liberté individuelle au détriment des droits des autres êtres humains est source de confusion et d'instabilité pour les parties prenantes. Elle montre également que la dépravation morale résulte de la négligence des autres, qui sont considérés comme des êtres humains inférieurs.

**Mots-clés :** ambition, mépris, liberté, pouvoir, orgueil

## Introduction

The novel *Absalom, Absalom!* by the American author William Faulkner is first published in 1936. Its setting covers the antebellum and postbellum period in the U.S. It tells the story of three families of the American South, with a focus on the life of Thomas Sutpen. *Absalom, Absalom!*, along with *The Sound and the Fury*, helped Faulkner win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949. In 2009, the novel received the reward for the best Southern novel of all times by a panel of judges.

The publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* has caught many scholar's attention. Evidently, David Madden (2011), Laura Commer, (2015), Eric Sandarg (2017), and Haihui Chen (2017) have acutely elaborated on topics ranging from slavery, racism, violence, hatred and to their effects on both the victims and victimizers. However, they tend to overlook the enjoyment of individual liberty with regard to pride and ambition. Various studies have addressed the experience of pride, albeit mostly in terms of intrapersonal characteristics. "Pride is an interesting emotion because it simultaneously focuses on the self and on others. Consequently, pride can be classified both as a self-conscious emotion revolving around the self." (Yvette et al., 2018, p. 404) In other words, pride is a pleasurable emotion that arises when people feel good about themselves, often in response to success. The notions of pride and ambition are important for the production of meaning in the context of our work.

Scholars shed light on the ground of ambition we want to venture. In this respect, ambition is "a combination of the pursuit of extrinsic career success in terms of pay and position and intrinsic success as the positive subjective evaluation of professional development. The extent to which an individual has "high achievement motivation and strong career orientation"(Otto et al., 2016, p. 23). In the same perspective, ambition is a "middle-level trait" expressed as persistent, aspirational desire to better one's situation by "striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment" (Judge & Kammeyer Mueller, 2012, p. 759). Besides, ambition is "the extent to which one is described as or identifying significant, "1) personal aspirations, 2) active and expressive engagement, 3) reliance on competitive and other external indicators for self-evaluation, 4) perseverance, 5) a degree of personal investment in a desired outcome." (Field, 2002, pp. 69) In addition, ambition is "Fuel for achievement" (Epstein, 1980, p. 1).

The notion of liberty is crucially important in a society where everyone is struggling to survive the social odds. Stressing its importance, the Australian moral philosopher and writer Henry (J. McCloskey, 1965, p. 483) notes:

LIBERTY now occupies a very secure and respected place as one of the great, and perhaps as the greatest and most important political ideals, and few would wish not to pay homage to it as such. Yet if we look at the writings of political philosophers, we find a widespread diversity of views as to the nature of liberty associated with the assumption that there is only one genuine concept and only one true ideal of liberty, whereas it might reasonably have been expected that the possibility of a number of distinct, genuine ideals of liberty might have been entertained.

Enjoying individual liberty has become very decisive for people all over the world in general and in American society in particular. In *American Civilization, An Introduction*, the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America stipulates:

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our prosperity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America. (Mauk and Oakland, 2014, p.394)

Understandably, liberty emphasizes the importance of individual rights and the limitations of government's power while freedom is more focused on the ability of individuals to act or think as one wants without being hindered by outside forces. The purpose of this study is to highlight the imperilment of individual liberty on the grounds of ambition and pride regardless of human rights.

The notions of pride, ambition and liberty are embedded in culture that is transmitted from one generation to another. Cultural Theory is used as a lens to explore the dynamics of liberty.

Taking inspiration from the Cultural Theory, the paper analyzes the various representations of individual liberty in *Absalom, Absalom!* Cultural Theory is a theory that seeks to understand the role of culture in modeling human behavior and beliefs. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is considered within the frame of this philosophical movement. It emphasizes the social and cultural values that individuals acquire as they struggle to find their way in the society. This theory equally highlights the various ways in which humans interpret their setting. Astrid Offermans (2010, pp.5-6) notes:

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), one of the most influential scientists for Cultural Theory as we know it today is the founding father of sociology Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). He did various research projects, but is best known for his work on suicide and solidarity. Society is –according to Durkheim- a moral phenomenon, held together by solidarity which can be either mechanic (which is the case in preindustrial, undifferentiated groups where cohesion is based upon a common set of beliefs) or organic (in industrial, differentiated groups) (Smith & Riley, 2009). Conflated with this dichotomy of mechanical and organic solidarity is his distinction between the dimension of group integration and individual integration, which are essentially identical with Douglas's group and grid dimensions.

Offermans in his research on cultural theory discusses how Emile Durkheim elaborates on group integration and individual integration which are very crucial part of culture for a society worth living. Though Cultural Theory is perceived by Emile Durkheim with regard to the dynamics of group integration and individual integration, it hovers on the verge of the fame by the publication of Mary Douglas' *Natural Symbols* (1970). Douglas argues that rituals as transmitters of culture generated in social relations and exercised a constraining effect on behavior. Each symbol only has meaning in relation to other symbols in a context. Cultural Theory has been applied to diverse attempts to conceptualize and understand the dynamics of culture. The works of Raymond Williams (1961) and Edward Palmer Thompson (1963) have been particularly influential in the development of post-war British cultural theory. Williams's emphasis on culture as a "whole way of life" and Thompson's emphasis on culture as the way in which groups "handle" the raw ma. Both Williams and Thompson studied the lived dimension of culture and the active and collective process of fashioning meaningful ways of life. Cultural theory in the study of William

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* stresses the dynamics of culture in constructing meaning by the intrinsic relation between the notions of individual liberty, pride and ambition. This paper is structured around two parts. The first part deals with the search for respectability and the second part comes up with the imbalanced life as a result of the achievement of respectability. This paper is structured around two parts. The first part stresses the search for respectability and the second part comes up with the consequences of the achievement of respectability.

### 1. The Search for Respectability

The novel depicts the rise and fall of white people born into poverty. The author uses migration as a strategy for such destitute people to improve their living conditions, to search for respectability. In Faulkner's novel, this is the case of Thomas Sutpen. His relocation from Western Virginia to Mississippi is expressed in the following passage: "Immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind him the wild blacks and the captive architect huddled quietly, carrying bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest." (Faulkner, 1986, p. 4) His relocation is a way of starting anew in order to achieve respectability. With that said, the notion of liberty takes a crucial dimension in *Absalom, Absalom!* An illumination in this regard is worth noting:

Liberty is . . . the right to do everything which does not harm others. . . . It is a question of the liberty of man regarded as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself. . . liberty as a right of man is not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. It is the right of such separation ... (Abraham, 1993, p. 947)

Taking inspiration from Abraham's position involving an individual doing things on his own, William Faulkner constructs Thomas Sutpen, one of his male characters who embodies this idea by searching for social respectability in *Absalom, Absalom!* Engaging Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson in a storyteller and listener relationship, the author reveals the ambition of Thomas Sutpen "...creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the *Be Sutpen's Hundred like the oldentime Be Light*. (Faulkner, 1986, p.4) His quest for respectability on his own is inherent in the enjoyment of liberty. Respectability "emphasize[s] reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations." Jefferson (2023, p.2). For Jefferson, an individual whose life is meaningless, should at a given time, decide to adopt a particular behavior and attitude both as a goal and a strategy to change his living conditions that would allow people to give him much respect. Thomas Sutpen in this regard, has the desire to change his life conditions. Very often, respectability lies in pride and ambition. When a human being is searching for respectability, he/she is ready to pay any price. Most of the time, the person who is seeking respectability tends to ignore other human beings' rights and even tends to exploit them in one way or another. To substantiate, the title of the novel "*Absalom, Absalom!*" is critical to the understanding of the enjoyment of individual liberty with regard to respectability. *Absalom, Absalom!* alludes to the story of King David and his son Absalom in the Christian Holy Bible. In the story, Absalom, the son of David, has an aspirational dream which is respectability. As a result, in the lifetime of his father, he conspired his father's kingdom by garnering people in Jerusalem to overthrow

David. Having under his disposal the consistent support, he eventually proclaimed himself the king of Hebron (*Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011, 2 Samuel 15. 1-23). Absalom did not mind the state of his father and his people. He even pursued his father expecting to kill him. He behaved like that for the sake of individual liberty. His excessive ambition and pride with regard to individual liberty then entailed his sudden death.

In our understanding, *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner depicts the life of Thomas Sutpen and his tough relations with his surroundings which is closer to Absalom as it is illustrated above. In the opening of the novel, William, while introducing Thomas Sutpen to the reader in search for respectability, he proceeds by circumlocution which is one aspect of his narrative techniques. Throughout the novel, he presents Sutpen from the viewpoint of other people. Seldom does the reader see Sutpen directly. The use of circumlocution to present the main character through indirection helps establish Sutpen as a mythical character, for there is nowhere in *Absalom, Absalom!* where the reader can see the birth and the growth of Thomas Sutpen. His introduction to the reader as a mythical character, is polemical. Through the words of Miss Rosa Coldfield to Quentin, we note:

Out of quiet thunderclap, he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a school prize water color, faint sulphurt-reek still in hair clothes and beard, with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed, and manacled among them the French achitec with his air grim, haggard, and tatteran. Immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind the wild blacks and the captive achitec huddled quietly, carrying in bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest. (Faulkner, 1986, p.4)

In the aforementioned quotation, Faulkner builds up the reader's inquiry about Thomas Sutpen existence. Clearing the inquiry, Miss Rosa Coldfield, one of the female characters, reveals the horseman with his ambition. Depending on a colonial and frontier tradition of individualism in which Americans defend their own interests and rights, William Faulkner has the horseman disclose his ambition proving that he enjoys his selfhood as C. B. Macpherson (1962, p.3) puts:

Possessive individualism: its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities...The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but an owner of himself. The relation of ownership... was read back into the nature of the individual.

This ambition which is to become a very important person, makes him seek the support of wild Blacks and the captive French architect. At this level, Thomas Sutpen known as the horseman, in search for respectability and wealth, does not mind the rights of Blacks and the captive French architect confirming what David Abraham (1993, p.947) noted with people who have ambitions:

The right of property is . . . the right to enjoy one's fortune and dispose of it as one will; without regard for others and independently of society. It is the right of self-interest. This individual liberty, and its application, form the basis of civil society. It leads every man to see in other men, not the realization, but rather the limitation of his own liberty.

An analysis of Sutpen's position with regard to Blacks and the architect allows a deeper understanding of most people who have an ambition in life. Due to their thirst for ambition, people can be enslaved for months or years depending on the time the ambition will be materialized. A Jamaican-born British sociologist and cultural theorist For Hall, culture was not something to simply appreciate or study, but a "critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled." (Procter, 2004, p.2) Hall, one of the main proponents of reception theory, developed Theory of encoding and decoding embedded in culture. Depending on Hallian position on culture, I infer the meaning that Thomas Sutpen has his own way of doing things. The rationale behind his ambition lies in paying the price.

The owner of the ambition will pay the price to establish himself entailing respect and confidence. William Faulkner yields the foundation of this international reputation to the reader in the following:

a man who fled here and hid, concealed himself behind respectability, behind that hundred miles of land which he took from the tribe of ignorant Indians, nobody knows how, and a house the size of a court-house where he lived for three years without a window or door or bedstead in it and still called it Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been a King's grant in unbroken perpetuity from his great grandfather [...]  
(Faulkner 1986, p.10)

An analysis of the excerpt above illuminates the reader on how Thomas Sutpen acquires the land which helps him build his mansion. Having him take the land from ignorant Indian tribe by William Faulkner is a moot point. Homi K. Bhabha (1994, p.2), a theorist of culture known for his work on the existence of spaces where cultural borders open up to each other, and creation of new hybrid culture that combines their features and atones their differences, advocates:

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions - of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation - that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

Homi K. Bhabha, in the passage above, culturally instructs the reader on how people elaborated strategies to achieve selfhood. They thought beyond the narratives of originality and initial subjectivities to devise new ways of ensuring their interests. In this respect, Thomas Sutpen, a male character constructed by William Faulkner, takes advantage of ignorant Indian tribe because he comes with two pistols and a myriad of Blacks. They are a source of intimidation that he depends on to compel Indians to give him the acres of land he needs. He has no feelings for them and their coming generations. The achievement of his ambition is what matters first. Whether people are dying or not, this is none of his business. If people like Thomas Sutpen would sacrifice others to achieve their ambition, there is a need to say that any search for respectability that gives room for enslaving others should be banned in the society. Human beings

should not then be considered as a means to achieve material things in the physical world.

By making Sutpen control the wild Blacks and the captive French architect, William Faulkner permits him to enjoy his liberty by building a mansion in the following passage:

--the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage, like this: *It seems that this demon – his name was Sutpen – (Colonel Sutpen) – Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation – (Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says) – tore violently. And married her sister Ellen and begot a son and a daughter which – (without gentleness begot, Miss Rosa Coldfield says) – without gentleness. Which should have been the jewels of his pride and the shield and comfort of his old age.* (Faulkner, 1986, pp.4-5)

In the passage above, Rosa Coldfield externalizes the dimension of Sutpen's mansion to Quentins. She better displays the identity of Sutpen and his house. Telling Quentins that Sutpen is a colonel is like informing the reader that the colonel's wishes are commands.

Furthermore, he starts building his plantation regardless of his surroundings. Upon completing this project which gives him satisfaction and comfort, Sutpen does not take his time to think twice before getting married to Ellen. The achievement of comfort he longs for pushes him to take this woman to meet his lust. For illustrative purpose, the following passage is worth nothing:

He came here with a horse and two pistols and a name which nobody ever heard before, knew for certain was his own anymore than the horse was his own or even the pistols, seeking some place to hide himself, and Yoknapatawpha County supplied him with it. He sought the guarantee of 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 and 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. Oh, I hold no brief for Ellen: blind romantic fool who had only youth and inexperience to excuse her even if that; blind romantic fool, then later blind woman mother fool [...].(Faulkner, 1986, pp.9-10)

In the passage above, through Rosa Coldfield's words, an enlightenment comes to the reader's mind in relation to Thomas Sutpen dealing with the scope of respectability. Considering the culture of the new environment in which he lives as (John Storey, 2021, p.16), one of the most influential figures of Cultural Theory, make a statement about the powerful minorities:

The popular culture of the majority has always been a concern of powerful minorities. Those with political power have always thought it necessary to police the culture of those without political power, reading it 'symptomatically' for signs of political unrest; reshaping it continually through patronage and direct intervention. In the nineteenth century, however, there is a fundamental change in this relationship. Those with power lose, for a crucial period, the means to control the culture of the subordinate classes. When they begin to recover control, it is culture itself, and not culture as a symptom or sign of something else, that becomes, really for the first time, the actual focus of concern.

The search for respectability brings Thomas Sutpen to use Ellen Coldfield as a means and not an end. Only what he needs "would be Ellen's and our father's names on a

wedding license (on any other patent of respectability) that people could look at and read just as he would have wanted our father's (or any other reputable man's) signature on a note of hand because our father knew who his father was in Tennessee and who his grandfather had been in Virginia" (Faulkner, 1986, p.11). Most notably, Thomas Sutpen relies on other people's respectability to build his own but with the difference to play tricks on the bearers he targets. Ellen Coldfield, who, stands for women and mother in general, falls in the snares of a lascivious man greedy of respectability. At this level, nothing or even human beings especially ladies are valuable to a man like Sutpen who is in search of reputation. Through the romantic relationship between Sutpen and Ellen, William Faulkner is launching an appeal to women to be awake in their ways of building romantic relationship with men who achieve respectability in society. They should not be blind. They should think twice before accepting the advances of men who disguise themselves as lambs though they are wolves seeking whom to devour on behalf of their reputation. Should the realization of comfortable achievement led people to take irresponsible and immature actions towards human beings, there is no need for bringing it under control. Most people like Thomas Sutpen, after achieving a comfortable building, indulge in thoughtless actions that stain their reputation. William Faulkner, by his construction of Thomas Sutpen, is inviting people who achieve comfortable mansions to think well before taking any actions. Thoughtful actions should stem from comfortable achievements proving then maturity expected from responsible people in society.

## 2. Imbalanced Life as a Result of the Achievement of Respectability

The author mentions four consequences related to the achievement of respectability.

The first example is sexual instability. To impose his respectability on others, Thomas Sutpen, after building a large plantation called Sutpen's Hundred, including an ostentatious mansion, indulges in sexual immorality. As a matter of fact, he gets married to Ellen Coldfield. Faulkner is having Rosa Coldfield, her junior sister reveal it in the passage below: "I, a child still too young to know more than that, though Ellen was my sister and Henry and Judith my own nephew and niece" (Faulkner 1986, p.14) Through Rosa Coldfield's statement, Sutpen's family is enlarged by Henry and Judith whom Ellen bears to Sutpen. The reader awaits Thomas Sutpen to stay with his family and cater for it. But surprisingly, the reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* allows to note that he cannot bring his lust under control with Ellen. He fathers another daughter. We encounter her presence in the following way: "Because until he came back from Virginia in '66 and found her living there with Judith and Clytie – (Yes, Clytie was his daughter too: Clytemnestra. He named her himself." (Faulkner 1986, p.48). Through Sutpen's behavior toward Ellen and his second woman noted above, the author exposes the reader to his new lifestyle. He goes from one woman to another. But before achieving respectability, he never adopts such a behavior. He prefers liberty to order as the following passage is worth noting:

Based on public opinion surveys conducted in Moscow and the former Soviet republics between 1989 and 1992, Gibson and his associates present empirical evidence to support their proposition that when given the choice between liberty and social order, those who support democracy and democratization tend to choose liberty in preference to order. To measure respondents' val-



uation of individual liberty vs. social order, they used the following statement in their surveys: "It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive." Disagreement with the state- ment stands for preference for liberty over order, and hence support for democracy. (Jie Chen and al., 2000, p.429)

Thomas Sutpen, as a character skillfully constructed by William Faulkner, seems to be a democrat. He would not like to respect any social order but do whatever pleases him regardless of any consequence his actions can lead to in *Absalom, Absalom!* I contend that an American writer Homi K. Bhabha (1994, p.2), one of the stakeholders of the Cultural Theory, is right in this perspective by raising the following questions:

How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?

People's priorities differ from one person to another. No matter the exchange of values by people in the society, priorities always lead to antagonism and conflicts as the reader notices it in Thomas Sutpen's surroundings. By having him adopt it, Faulkner thus enlightens the reader on how some men who realize respectability engage in sexual immorality in the society that casts disgrace upon them. The second example of instability in achieving respectability is corruption.

In the context of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner has Sutpen display corruption toward Ellen, his wife in a discussion:

"Where is Judith, Thomas?" Ellen said  
"Judith" he said. Oh, he was not lying; his own triumph had outrun him; he had builded even better in evil than even he could have hoped.  
'Judith? Isn't she in bed?  
'Don't lie to me, Thomas,' Ellen said. 'I can understand your bringing Henry here to see this, wanting Henry to see this; I will try to understand it; yes, I will make myself try to understand it. But not Judith, Thomas. Not my baby girl, Thomas.'  
'I don't expect you to understand it, 'he said. 'Because you are a woman.'  
(Faulkner, 1986, p. 21)

In the excerpt above, Thomas Sutpen tries to lies Ellen, his wife. She does not approve like his way of treating him. She even says that corruption known as an evil, is part of his habit. Emphasizing the level of his corruption, the following passage is worth noting:

Because Sutpen was acting his role too. He had corrupted Ellen in more ways than one. He was the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county now, which state he had attained by the same tactics with which he had built his house—the same single-minded unflagging effort and utter disregard of how his actions which the town could see might look and how the indicated ones which the town could not see must appear to it. (Faulkner, 1986, p.56)

An analysis of Sutpen's behavior toward Ellen, his wife, after his achievement of respectability, is a moot point. Before living with her, there is nowhere in the novel he shows dishonesty toward any character. If he corrupts his wife more than one ways, it

means that he takes advantage of her with regard to his new social status. Faulkner, through Sutpen's behavior, is launching an appeal to husbands who bring respectability under control to be honest toward their wives. They should then know that corruption which is morally wrong will imperil their homes. Betrayal and hatred are inherent in the achievement of respectability.

Then Faulkner talks about betrayal and hatred as the third consequence of searching for respectability. To substantiate, the author is having Rosa Coldfield embody this idea. The reader would wonder why Faulkner has Miss Rosa narrate the first chapter in which we hear Sutpen referred to as a demon or a djinn:

This was the mother, the dead sister Ellen: this Niobe without tears who had conceived to the demon in a kind of nightmare, who even while alive had moved but without life and grieved but without weeping, who now had an air of tranquil and unwitting desolation, not as if she had either outlived the others or had died first, but as if she had never lived at all. (Faulkner, 1986, pp.8-9)

From the passage above, the reader wonders if his view of Sutpen would be different if he had not already been prejudiced by Miss Rosa's view. This passage depicts Sutpen as a strong, powerful, independent, and individualistic man who can and will do anything to achieve his ends. He maltreats Ellen in such a way that she becomes lifeless. Rosa Coldfield who is her biological sister cannot help noting this maltreatment. Her sister's life is pitiful and awful within the hands of Sutpen, what Jeffery A. Clymer (2006, p.172) calls "being without property". Understandably, Ellen Coldfield loses her authentic selfhood which C. Taylor (1991, p.27) refers to as "intimate contact with oneself". But surprisingly, she stays in his home until she loses her life for some reasons that Eeva Sointu and Linda Woodhead (2008, p.267) allow the reader to apprehend in the following:

Several of our informants spoke of dealing with the problem of having lost a sense of self in the context families in which the needs of husbands, children and dependent relatives took priority over personal self-realization. I still have my life journey around relationships of men. I sacrificed myself and sacrificed my truth for the sake of relationships.

Ellen Coldfield bears all the sufferings in Sutpen's home because of the needs of her husband and children. He betrays confidence his in-laws put in him. Observing Sutpen's reactions toward Ellen, her biological sister, Rosa Coldfield only hates the "demon". She even calls him a demon. A demon does never do good things to people. He will only torture their lives. Sutpen known as a demon causes unbearable pains to his wife. His behavior toward his wife upon the realization of respectability stirs up hatred from Rosa for him. Faulkner then instructs the reader on betrayal and hatred that people leave in their environment after reaching a respectful status in the society. Faulkner eventually comes up with the family ruin as a result of the achievement of respectability. He has Thomas Sutpen destroy Coldfield's family. He ruins Coldfield's family by his violence and his pride:

I saw what had happened to Ellen, my sister. I saw her almost a recluse, watching those two doomed children growing up whom she was helpless to save. I saw the price which she had paid for that house and that pride; I saw the notes of hand on pride and contentment and peace and all to which she had put her signature when she walked into the church that night, begin to

fall due in succession. I saw Judith's marriage forbidden without rhyme or reason or shadow of excuse ; I saw Ellen die with only me, a child, to turn to and ask to protect her remaining child ; I saw Henry repudiate his home and birthright and then return and practically fling the bloody corpse of his sister sweetheart at the hem of her wedding ; I saw that man return—the evil's source and head which had outlasted all its victims—who had created two children not only to destroy one another and his own line, but my line as well, yet I agreed to marry him. (Faulkner, 1986, p.12)

In the excerpt above, Faulkner makes her a witness of the ruins of Sutpen's and her family's downfall. The stark position of Rosa Coldfield as regards the destruction Sutpen's own family and of her family by Thomas Sutpen cannot be neglected. An analysis of Miss Rosa's statement shows that Sutpen is undeniably responsible for the downfall of his own family and the Coldfield family. His irresponsible behavior leads Henry to murder Bon, his half-brother who engages Judith, her half-sister for marriage:

Henry spurred ahead and turned his horse to face Bon and took out the pistol ; and Judith and Clytie heard the shot, and maybe Wash Jones was hanging around somewhere in the back yard and so he was there to help Clytie and Judith carry him into the house and lay him on the bed, and Wash went to town to tell the Aunt Rosa and the Aunt Rosa comes boiling out that afternoon and finds Judith standing without a tear before the closed door, holding the metal case she had given him with her picture in it but that didn't have her picture in it now but that of the octoroon and the kid. (Faulkner, 1986, p.286)

An analysis of the courageous action which Henry takes shows that he takes inspiration from his father's behavior. As a result, Rosa Coldfield considers him some type of brute instrument of God's injustice, in that the good and innocent are also spoiled with the strong and wicked. Rosa Coldfield believes that man is at the mercy of a capricious.

## Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to analyze the actions and reactions of the characters in Faulkner's novel in the framework of individual liberty. It has equally discussed the negative repercussions of excessive pride with regards to the characters. The work has highlighted pride and excessive ambition as hindrances to social stability, particularly with respect to enjoying individual liberty as portrayed in *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner. The study has shown that, individual liberty as one of the core values by people all over the world and its management to gain respectability, often entails hatred, humiliation and loss of power.

The imperilment of the social fabric as regards pride and ambition depends on the enjoyment of individual liberty at the expense of the rights of other human beings causing confusion and instability to the stakeholder. It has also demonstrated that moral depravity stems from the neglect of others who are considered less human beings in the society. Through the use of Cultural Theory, the dynamics of culture has waved the relationship between the powerful minorities and the majority with a limited power to anticipate actions and reactions that would destroy the family structure to strengthen the society as a whole.

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