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Master's Thesis

**William Faulkner's Transcendental Hero
in *Absalom, Absalom!***

**GRADUATE SCHOOL
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English Language and Literature

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William Faulkner's Transcendental Hero
in Absalom, Absalom!

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Table of Contents:

1. Introduction	1
2. Free will	8
3. Labor	17
4. Human Weaknesses	34
5. Conclusion	43
6. Bibliography	47
7. Abstract.....	49

1 Introduction

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, one of the leading transcendentalist scholars Ralph Waldo Emerson briefly defined the term “transcendentalism” in his journal on October 6, 1836, “Transcendentalism means says our accomplished Mrs. B. [Almira Penningman Barlow], with a wave of her hand, “a little beyond” (Emerson, 1982 111) Furthermore, Emerson states in his essay “The Transcendentalist”:

What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us is Idealism...the idealist on the power of Thought and of Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture... the idealist contends that his way of thinking is in higher nature (Emerson, 1940 87).

Therefore, From Emerson’s statements, it can be stated that a transcendental person differs from common people in the case of their culture and their mental strength level, for instance, their thinking capacity, will power, and inspiration will be “a little beyond”. Following Emerson’s statement, William Faulkner’s protagonist Thomas Sutpen, in his novel “*Absalom, Absalom!*” is regarded as an American transcendental hero. But in establishing Sutpen’s transcendental

heroism Faulkner doesn't focus on religion, spiritualism, or idealism rather he depicts his protagonist's free will, and his attitude to labor through practical actions which are "a little beyond realistic".

Cathryn McIntyre explains "The transcendentalists believed in what Emerson called "The Over-Soul" —a spiritual presence that pervades all aspects of man and nature" (McIntyre 2). Spiritualism in humans, according to this scholar, is the fundamental aspect of transcendentalism. On the other hand, Nicholas Friesner points out "This is not to deny Emerson's transcendental newness... that is modeled after the anti-essentialist and progressive view of religious life that Emerson takes as central to his work" (Friesner 145). Emersonian transcendentalism is explained here as centered on religion, bringing some newness to religious perception and thought. Emerson stated transcendentalism as "idealism as it exists in 1842" (Emerson, 194087). In the section of Margaret Fuller *Ossoli's Memoirs* (1852), William Henry Channing refers to it as "a vague yet exalting conception of the godlike nature of the human spirit" (Habich 89). However, these concepts are interconnected because transcendentalists commonly agree on the supremacy of each human being. After all, the divine exists within every soul. On the contrary, Faulkner depicts Emerson's transcendentalism from a practical, or realistic, standpoint. This thesis examines Faulkner's transcendentalism which is established through his protagonist Thomas Sutpen following Emerson's view of "a little beyond" but grounded realistically.

“Transcendentalism”, according to Emerson can be stated as “transcending or going a little beyond” the limitation in the case of humanistic qualities, such as conscience, free will, intelligence, masculinity, and laboriousness. Faulkner depicts Sutpen’s transcendental heroism as an innate quality. His superiority over other people in society as an individual is first apparent in his teenage years of thirteen or fourteen (not mentioned specifically in the novel). As mentioned, “a boy of either thirteen or fourteen” (170)¹.

First of all, Faulkner represents Sutpen’s transcendentalism mainly through his strong free will. Jerry Phillips points out,

A central tenet of Transcendentalism was the conviction that human beings could elevate themselves beyond their baser animal instincts, attain a higher consciousness (Phillips & Ladd³⁴).

Whenever Sutpen realizes his existence means nothing to his surrounding world due to his lowest social class, his inner spirit is triggered and pushes him to elevate himself. Consequently, his consciousness and spirit have developed and reached such a level whose impact can be observed in his mind through his strong free will

1) William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York, Vintage 1990). Further references to this work are incorporated in the text, with page numbers appearing in parentheses.

and in his activities through his attitude towards labor. Both of them are "a little beyond".

Faulkner shows Sutpen's strong free will as his innate characteristic which is strong enough along with his powerful thinking capability to achieve his target. Emerson clarifies the transcendental will power as:

All that you call the world is the shadow of that substance which you are, the perpetual creation of the powers of thought, of those that are dependent and of those that are independent of your will (Emerson, 1940 90).

The reason for Sutpen's achievements is his powerful thought and strong free will. In his adolescent age, his free will drives him to make a "design", in other words, "planning" towards his transcendental goal. He tells Mr. Compson,

I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family-incidentally of course, a wife. I set out to acquire these, asking no favor of any man. I even risked my life at one time (195).

In this statement, Sutpen mentions the requirements of his design which are realistic, and to complete his design once he even risks his life which is not common for ordinary people, and thus it was "a little beyond realistic".

Emerson's transcendental feature "The power of thought and of will" is found in Sutpen's statement of his design by which Faulkner expresses his strong free will. His motivation is his social status as he is born and brought up in a poor family, both financially and socially and he faces a disgraceful situation due to his social class. For this reason, he desperately wants to complete his "design which Faulkner shows as immeasurable by Quentin's comment; "The design, - Getting richer and richer (193)".

Faulkner established Sutpen's transcendentalism through his laboriousness and his approaches to labor that are "a little beyond realistic". Emerson states regarding a transcendental person,

I make my circumstance. Let any thought or motive of mine be different from that they are, the difference will transform my condition and economy (Emerson, 1940 90).

Sutpen, according to Emerson's transcendentalism, is different from ordinary people because of his thinking and motive, especially his practical and realistic attitude toward labor, which helps him achieve

his transcendental goal by transforming his economy and social status. Indeed, Sutpen makes his fortune which is in Emerson's word "circumstance" only by himself.

The ultimate reason behind Sutpen's transformation into a transcendental hero at an adolescent age is his poor financial condition which lowers his social status and humiliates him at the big house gate. While depicting Sutpen's transcendental labor, Faulkner also realistically features the 19th-century American South's labor management system as well as the value of labor. Faulknerian value of labor in case of *Absalom, Absalom!* can be stated as,

Sutpen's Hundred is designed and founded in accordance with Faulkner's labor theory of value which tells humanity surviving from brute hood (Lim 223).

In response to the humiliation, Sutpen makes a 'design' and finally completes that design by establishing an ostentatious palace 'Sutpen's Hundred' with a plantation of a hundred square miles mainly through his labor. He brings a revolutionary change in his life through his hard work as well as by implementing unconventional team labor management. To make an honorable life from a disgraceful social life, he could transform himself from an ordinary person to a

transcendental hero through his labor and thus, 'humanity surviving from brute hood'. Therefore, it can be said that the foundation of Faulkner's transcendentalism is labor in the case of Sutpen.

Most importantly Faulkner imposes some humanistic weaknesses on Sutpen's character, although these weaknesses undermine his heroic qualities, at the same time through the combination of heroism and humanistic weaknesses the protagonist is mainly depicted as more realistic. Racism and a male-dominant attitude are evident in his character. However, because Sutpen lacks family education, those human flaws appear highly natural in his character, and Faulkner is highly successful in portraying his protagonist's transcendentalism "a little beyond realistic."

2.Free Will

One of the prominent transcendentalists Henry David Thoreau defines a key aspect of transcendentalism as:

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor (Thoreau 68).

Therefore, to elevate one's life the highest priority goes to "an infinite expectation" rather than material support as it keeps the consciousness awake even while sleeping. Faulkner depicts Sutpen's free will as "an infinite expectation" which is observed as "a little beyond" in the case of his thinking, planning, and taking necessary practical attempts, for example leaving home at an adolescent age and going to the West Indies. Indeed, his strong free will plays the most vital role in making him a transcendental hero.

David Jacobson points out, "self-reliance consists in an unlimited will, a will that knows no formal conditions" (Jacobson 556). He further states regarding Emersons's transcendentalism in the case of practicality as:

Emerson conceives no end to this process; And the practical activity that enables right vision is the process of overcoming self- and natural determination (566).

Emerson's transcendentalism, according to this scholar, is founded on formally unconditional and unlimited free will and practicality. To be confidently self-sufficient, unlimited free will is required, as well as practical actions to activate the appropriate vision and determination. Therefore, both unlimited free will along with practical action are required to achieve success which is apparent in Sutpen's transcendentalism.

To better understand Sutpen's transcendently heroic free will, his life's remarkable events must be examined, particularly the incident of his humiliation at the big house gate during his adolescence, which marks the beginning of his transformation into a transcendental hero. This is the most significant moment in Sutpen's life because the humiliating incident causes his consciousness to awaken for the first time, triggering his free will to desperately seek a solution. However, his reawakened senses later drive his free will towards a goal that was consistently stable, which is considered realistic as well as "a little beyond" the common person's capacity. The most important incident that inspires Thomas Sutpen to be a transcendental hero occurs when

he is sent to the planter's door with a message from his father. He doesn't expect to be told by the house servant:

even before he had had time to say what he came for, never to come to that front door again but to go around to the back (173).

Here, Sutpen's transcendentalism at first becomes apparent in his perception and reaction against this humiliating incident and later on in his stimulated free will towards the immeasurable goal as a consequence of the insult. This is highly natural that in a class-distinguished society most of the lower-class people used be confronted by this sort of humiliation very often but they tolerate it and compromise with the situation. As Peter Kolchin observes that the society at the time was:

a highly stratified world in which the rich and powerful savagely exploited the poor and powerless.' Gentlemen' not only expected to receive the deference of their social inferiors but were willing to expend considerable force to ensure it (Martin, 404).

The poor were frequently suppressed and insulted by the rich elite

class. Fischer states regarding Sutpen's contemporary society is "marked by deep and pervasive inequalities, by a staple agriculture and rural settlement patterns, by powerful oligarchies of large landowners" (Martin 405). Faulkner depicts the social hierarchy as "an absolute caste system" (256). Although Sutpen belonged to the non-elite class, instinctively he couldn't accept and compromise with this insult like other lower-class common people; rather, his reaction was remarkable and can be described as "a little beyond". Mr. Compson mentioned:

It was like that, he said, like an explosion—a bright glare that vanished and left nothing, no ashes nor refuse; just a limitless flat plain with the severe shape of his intact innocence rising from it like a monument. (203).

The incident acts as a trigger by which his consciousness is reawakened. At that very moment, he is broken completely and at the same time, he is reborn and reformed as a transcendental hero. Furthermore, it is to be deeply focused on his immediate reaction, more specifically his thinking and action just after the incident at the big house gate. Mr. Compson states,

He didn't even remember leaving. All of a sudden, he found himself running and already some distance from the house,

and not toward home. He was not crying, he said. He wasn't even mad. He just had to think, so he was going to where he could be quiet and think, and he knew where that place was. He went into the woods (173).

He was an adolescent at that time; therefore, naturally he was unaware about the reality, (e.g., social class division and his social level or status) due to his innocence as well as immaturity but the words delivered by the house servant were extremely hurtful to his self-respect. That's why although he couldn't deeply understand the reason to be insulted due to being mentally unstable as a result of a sudden and unexpected situation at the very moment but he was assured that he had to think about why he should go around the back door. Martin states, "This scene sets in motion Sutpen's design, and he is successful in equipping himself to fulfill his design" (Martin 399). Sutpen had the option of compromising his self-esteem and social standing or fighting back to change his situation and place himself in an honorable prestigious position. As a man with heroism, he chose to elevate himself. Martin says, "Sutpen is uncertain how to respond but is determined, as he notes, to combat them" (Martin 400). Although he was unsure how to fight back against his current situation due to his young age, his free will determined a mindset to bring a revolutionary change in his life.

The extreme expression of Sutpen's free will is found in Quentin's statement as he recounts the details he learns from his father; more

specifically the personal information Sutpen shared with General Compson that he tells his friend Shreve:

All of a sudden, he discovered not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not, because if he did not do it he knew that he could never live with himself for the rest of his life (164).

Sutpen's free will instinctively give him a direction to do something in response to the humiliation; otherwise, he will not be able to live a normal life because the issue of self-respect is like a life and death-question to him. If he cannot find a solution, he will not be able to keep his soul alive and he had to live like a living death. His free will instructs him to seek redress for the insult. He expresses his inner feelings as:

he said, hearing the two of them without listening. Because what he was thinking about now, he hadn't asked for. It was just there, natural in a boy, a child, and he not paying any attention to it either because it was what a boy would have thought, and he knew that to do what he had to do in order to live with himself.... thinking the nigger never give me a chance to tell him what it was so, he will get paid back (176).

Although he is not consciously paying attention to his action plan against his humiliation his free will instinctively be making a design to pay back. As mentioned: "he would have to think it out straight as a man would" (176). It is the very moment when he understands how he should solve the issue and through the words "a man" he means a person with complete manhood which is in a deeper sense a hero with free will.

Furthermore, Faulkner represents Sutpen's free will as "a little beyond" through relating his planning with heroic laboriousness in parallel. As stated in the novel,

And that at the very moment when he discovered what it was, he found out that this was the last thing in the world he was equipped to do because he not only had not known that he would have to do this, he did not even know that it existed to be wanted, to need to be done, until he was almost fourteen years old (164).

He immediately decides to fight back when he discovers the existing social inequality based on money and power, and he belongs to the lower class, which is the reason for his humiliation. After realizing the

fact, the first attempt he takes is to leave his home and family forever.

As mentioned:

He left that night. He waked before day and departed just like he went to bed: by rising from the pallet and tiptoeing out of the house. He never saw any of his family again. 'He went to the West Indies (177).

Here it comes to focus that usually at the age of fourteen adolescents naturally want to live in the shelter of their family, especially in their parents' protection as they feel it is the safest and most secure place for them. Therefore, they don't want to lose it unless they become bound under any inevitable circumstances. On the contrary, being an innate transcendental hero, Sutpen's free will leads him towards an unknown, unsecured, and, extremely challenging life leaving a secured familial shelter at a very young age.

The attempt to leave home and think and work so brilliantly at such a young age is not common in other adolescents, but Supen's free will drive him to choose to do it because his free will is "a little beyond" the ordinary people.

Next, to understand Sutpen's transcendently heroic free will completely, the remarkable attempts that he takes at his mature age

are to be analyzed. In course of time, Sutpen starts working as an overseer on a plantation in the French West Indies and, after putting down a slave revolt, is offered the hand of the plantation owner's daughter, Eulalia Bon and he marries her. Sutpen tells Mr. Compson:

On this night I am speaking of (and until my first marriage, I might add) I was still a virgin.... So, I will only say that that too was a part of the design which I had in my mind (184).

Sutpen's statement demonstrates his unwavering commitment to his free will under any circumstances. He chose to participate in extremely hard work with his Negro slaves on the plantation of hundreds of square miles of virgin land, as well as the construction of an ostentatious mansion. Sutpen could achieve great success in his life by reaching the pinnacle of both financial and social success by establishing "Sutpen's Hundred" and having a complete family. He could be successful due to having an awakened sense that drives his heroic free will by which Faulkner shows his transcendentalism as "a little beyond realistic" because achieving this level of success is not common at all in ordinary people.

3. Labor

In portraying Sutpen's transcendentalism Faulkner mainly focuses on his laboriousness and his approaches to his coworkers' labor management which are "a little beyond realistic". The writer practically represents the value and outcome of labor through his protagonist.

As one of the twentieth century thinkers, Faulkner typifies the era's material maxim that labor is what makes us human and it fulfills our species essence (Lim 223).

According to the statement, Sutpen is not treated and valued as a human at the big house gate, but over time he comes to the forefront of society by elevating his social status through his labor.

Faulkner expresses Sutpen's transcendental goal as a "design" in which he requires money, a house, a plantation (land), slaves, and, a family to complete his design. However, aiming to achieve such a goal is realistic and at the same times "a little beyond" because Sutpen belongs to the lowest class both economically and socially but aiming from such a level toward the peak of society is not very usual. The most important fact even above his aim and thinking is, firstly his laboriousness which is observed in language learning, becoming a

sailor, and, working extremely hard in the plantation, and, secondly his practical approach to his coworkers as a team leader; for example, his participation in same hard work, as well as entertainment with them along with showing generosity and honor by which he psychologically stimulated them to attain the possible highest output of labor to achieve his target is not common and conventional at all.

Miss Rosa Coldfield remembers:

He [Sutpen] and the twenty Negroes worked together, plastered over with mud against the mosquitoes... working in the sun and heat of summer and the mud and ice of winter, with quiet and unflagging fury..It took him two years...They worked from sunup to sundown while parties of horsemen rode up and sat their horses quietly and watched (25-26).

Here Faulkner emphasizes two important aspects of Sutpen's labor. First and foremost, his heroic endurance of extremely hard labor, as well as his unconventional but remarkable fruitful labor management approaches. Working for two years in extreme heat, cold, and even against mosquitoes while having the option to avoid such labor demonstrates his transcendently heroic toleration and determination, in parallel with establishing an unorthodox and highly efficient labor management system by involving in the same hard

work to lead them proves his strong sense of practicality. Faulkner, through the laboriousness and those unconventional and practical approaches, shows his protagonist's transcendentalism as "a little beyond realistic".

In depicting Sutpen's labor, Faulkner portrays the pervasive inequalities of social class that prevailed among the planters, niggers, and poor whites in nineteenth-century Southern American society. Sutpen observes "niggers working in the fields while white men sat fine horses and watched them" (168). In his adolescent age, he deeply observes the assigned labor of all social classes, such as labor among his familial members compared to other surrounding elite classes, non-elite class (poor whites), and nigger people which seem unfair to him. Faulkner represents Sutpen as hard-working, both mentally and physically and he invests his labor brilliantly which helps him to reach his goal. Gretchen Martin states:

Sutpen uses this pragmatic class attitude toward labor to advance his design (Martin 407).

Sutpen's attitude toward labor especially the way he deals with his Negro slaves is sensible and practical, indeed realistic and the output is highly fruitful; therefore, can be said to be pragmatic. A person from the lowest class like Sutpen uses the best labor dealing strategy

compared to other contemporary planters proving his capacity “a little beyond” the common people as well as being realistic. General Compson told his son, Quentin's father:

While the Negroes were working Sutpen never raised his voice at them, that instead he led them, caught them at the psychological instant by example, by some ascendancy of forbearance rather than by brute fear (25).

In the nineteenth-century American south, the socio-economy was based on plantations, and the elite class people who owned the lands and slaves never involved themselves in hard work. Rather they used to monitor the workers sitting in a comfortable place. On the contrary, Sutpen worked in his plantation with his Negro slaves although he owned them. Although Miss Rosa Coldfield was represented as an antagonist repulsive to Sutpen but she even noticed that his willingly taken hardship was not only for earning money but also for something else which she couldn't understand clearly because that was “a little beyond” her understanding. Martin points at:

His [Sutpen's] attitude regarding his own personal labor, Sutpen employs a rather pragmatic management strategy that serves a range of objectives. By working in the fields, he benefits from his

own labor, can oversee the industry of his slaves, and demonstrate his own physical power by asserting another backcountry value of masculinity based on strength, stamina, and the ability to endure physical hardship. He thus controls his slaves by example rather than force (Martin 408).

Sutpen establishes an example through enduring hardship. Although he has the option of not participating in such hard work from sunrise to sunset against the mosquitoes, he chose to do it which is "a little beyond realistic".

From Martin's analysis, it can be said that Sutpen brings out the highest output of his teamwork because when he works together with his Negro slaves, he doesn't need to control them by force due to his involvement in enduring the same or more physical hardship and, also it mentally stimulates them to work harder. Emerson states regarding transcendental action:

Although in his action overpowered by the laws of action, and so, warmly cooperating with men, even preferring them to himself (Emerson, 1940 89).

Following Emerson's statement, Sutpen's action is overpowered by his own made labor law as his participation in hard work with his Negro slaves brings the highest possible output of work. Besides, his involvement in cooperating with his workers breaks the conventional labor norms of his contemporary society and he establishes himself as a distinguished ideal by which Faulkner shows Sutpen's attitude towards labor as "a little beyond" as well as practical.

Faulkner depicts his transcendentalism as realistic through Sutpen's intellectual effort of learning new languages, the dialect, and French. He does it to communicate with the Negro slaves and thus control them appropriately. He has never anyone to guide or advise him except himself. Therefore, it is only he who has to realize and take action accordingly as well as practically. As mentioned:

he ever made to those six or seven years which must have existed somewhere, must have actually occurred, was about the patois he had to learn in order to oversee the plantation, and the French he had to learn (184).

In the West Indies, whenever he discovers that all people don't speak the same language, he realizes that without learning that language he will not be able to complete his design. Establishing a plantation is a part of his design. That's why he can realize that he will need to learn

new languages to communicate with his coworkers. Later, while establishing the plantation of hundreds of square miles of virgin land and an ostentatious palace "Sutpen's Hundred," he has to communicate with his Negro workers and the French architect in their own languages, and then his accumulated knowledge serves as his power by meeting his practical need. Putting effort into learning languages demonstrates his practical attitude toward labor because intellectual effort requires a significant amount of both physical and mental labor. As pointed out:

he had believed that courage and shrewdness would be enough but found that he was wrong...when he discovered that all people did not speak the same tongue and realized that he would not only need courage and skill, he would have to learn to speak a new language, else that design to which he had dedicated himself would die still born (184).

Leaving family and moving to a new country at an adolescent age undoubtedly shows his bravery and shrewdness and he is well aware of those qualities that he possesses but still, he realizes they are insufficient to achieve his goal. His practicality can be observed as being very well organized by his self-evaluation of the accomplishment of his labor by saying "he was wrong" and afterward proceeding into language learning as part of the practical approach

to labor. Therefore, he realistically equipped himself by gathering knowledge of a new language that worked as his strength in his later life.

Furthermore, Faulkner depicts Sutpen's laboriousness as his reasonable and appropriate practicality because it is based on the needs of the time and situation which is illustrated by his becoming a sailor when the necessity arises. Shreve mentions, "So he learned the language just like he learned to be a sailor" (184). Although Sutpen did not explain how he got to the West Indies or how he became a sailor at the age of fourteen or fifteen, recounting his current situation demonstrated that he had to go through all of those steps practically to reach his current situation. As quoted:

He went to the West Indies. That's how Sutpen said it: not how he managed to find where the West Indies were nor where ships departed from to go there, nor about the hardships of a sailor's life and it must have been hardship indeed for him, a boy of fourteen or fifteen who had never seen the ocean before (178).

Shreve could conclude through analyzing Sutpen's success realistically that he learned to endure the hardships of being a sailor in the same way that he learned languages.

Emerson states in favor of a transcendental person "You call it the power of circumstance, but it is the power of me" (Emerson, 1940 90). Accordingly, Sutpen does not establish himself through the 'consequence of fate,' or in Emerson's words, the 'power of circumstance,' but rather through his practical action and labor. However, leaving the country and becoming a sailor at the age of fourteen or fifteen, while simultaneously realistically engaging in language learning, demonstrates his bravery, courage, and, above all, laboriousness "a little beyond realistic".

Moreover, Faulkner represents Sutpen's transcendentalism through his unique and unconventional attitude to labor which was unfamiliar to the common southern people as well as the lawgivers but his rapid success proves him more practical and efficient than the prevailing community and thus demonstrates "a little beyond realistic". "Emerson states regarding transcendental labor:

In action, he easily incurs the charge of antinomianism by his avowal that he, who has the Lawgiver, may with safety not only neglect, but even contravene every written commandment (Emerson, 1940 91).

Sutpen's actions and attitude toward labor are a direct reflection of Emerson's statement, as evidenced by the perception and reaction of those around him. After migrating to Yoknapatawpha Country, Mississippi, as a stranger, the entire citizenry is confused and has doubts about his activities, whether he is involved in any illegal activities or not, and he appears to them as a mysterious person solely because his working approach is different from theirs. As mentioned, "when he came back this time, he was in a sense a public enemy" (30). Although there is no evidence that he violates any country's laws, he comes to public attention due to his unique working style. Even without a conviction, once the city Sheriff has to arrest him. As stated:

There was still no warrant for him, you see: it was just public opinion in an acute state of indigestion (32).

Sutpen shows an ascetic attitude to labor which attracts public attention because it is "a little beyond" the comprehension of the common people. He stays in a room in "Holston House" (26) after arriving in Jefferson and always carries his key with him. He starts work before daylight, leaving town, as a hardworking individual. He eats his dinner quickly. Like the other common people, he doesn't make any

friends and never spends his time gossiping or drinking with the locals because he is so dedicated to his work as if it seems like a physical or mental disorder to the common people, therefore his overall attitude to work makes them suspect whether he is involved in any illegal activities for what he is hiding. As explained in the novel:

Sutpen lacked not only the money to spend for drink and conviviality, but the time and inclination as well: that he was at this time completely the slave of his secret and furious impatience, his conviction gained from whatever that recent experience had been—that fever mental or physical—of a need for haste, of time fleeing beneath him (23).

Sutpen avoids public contact to maximize his time utilizing up to the highest level in such a way that is unusual and beyond the understanding of ordinary people. Most importantly, the outcome of his practical labor brings him rapid prosperity that comes to public attention when he purchases hundreds of square miles of virgin land which makes them more suspicious due to their limited or little understanding of a transcendental hero but through his practically dedicated approach to work Faulkner depicts his protagonist's transcendentalism as "a little beyond realistic". As analyzed:

Working in the fields alongside their slaves, for those who could afford them, was standard practice for yeomen farmers, but for the planter elite, such conduct was a contradiction to the leisure ethic and undermined defining principles of status (Martin 407).

The elite planters of the nineteenth-century American South did not participate in the fieldwork who could afford to hire workers. Traditionally, involvement in fieldwork with lower-class workers was regarded as disgraceful by aristocratic white Southerners. Sutpen's laborious attitude, on the other hand, was completely opposed to distinguished society. Emerson mentions, "We (the transcendentalists) perish of rest and rust" (Emerson 1940 99). Sutpen, as a realistic transcendental hero, couldn't sit back and relax like other contemporary planters because he was a man of action with no time for idleness. However, Sutpen's practicality and efficiency can be seen in his labor management, where he did not follow his contemporary prevailing planters and instead initiated a rationalized system by participating in labor with his coworkers. The planters in the south used to control their workers with a violent approach because it was a racially distinguished society where the elite class treated the lower class with humiliation. On the contrary, Sutpen showed an opposite approach by being generous to them. General Compson stated that Sutpen never raised his voice over them; rather, he led

them by setting an example of hard labor by silently working side by side with them. As a result, from one perspective, he assisted his coworkers by participating in the same hard work as one of them. He also took part in enticing boxing matches with his Negro slaves. As a result, he became one of them, demonstrating his generosity as a team leader. His attitude, however, reveals not only his generosity but also his practicality because his overall approach, particularly his generosity, kept his coworkers mentally calm and relaxed by getting him as one of them, which psychologically stimulated them to work harder, and thus he obtained the best teamwork outcome. Emerson states, "the strong spirits overpower those around them" (Emerson, 1940 102). Sutpen's laborious spirit and generous approach to his coworkers as a team leader proved his practicality as it created a positive vibe that overpowered the entire team mentally and physically to be more efficient. His labor operation system has been established as "a little beyond" the typical planters' labor law and his success in completing his design by establishing a hundred-square miles plantation with an ostentatious mansion "Sutpen's Hundred" proved his practicality as realistic, altogether "a little beyond realistic".

Furthermore, as a significant approach of practicality Sutpen used to organize nighttime boxing matches as an entertainment event for his coworkers. He not only organized but also participated in fighting. Miss Rosa Coldfield tells Quentin:

That's what Ellen saw: her husband and the father of her children standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the Negro just fallen evidently, lying at his feet and bloody too (19).

Faulkner depicts the two practical aspects of Sutpen's participation in boxing games. First of all, he practically establishes equality with his Negro slaves by making them think and feel that he is one of them, which encourages them to work spontaneously. The matches took place in front of a crowd of men from the town and his slaves. White people stood on all three sides of the ring, watching and witnessing, but only Sutpen dared to participate. Miss Rosa mentions:

white faces on three sides, the black ones on the fourth, and in the center two of his wild Negroes fighting, naked, fighting not as white men fight, with rules and weapons, but as Negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad (18-19).

There were certain rules and weapons when white people organized fighting games, but Sutpen, despite being white, did not follow them and instead accepted the way the Negroes fought. He did it against the conventional social norms of white southerners, and in doing so;

he honored his coworkers' norms. Honoring and following their norms motivated his team workers to accept him as one of them, allowing Sutpen to easily influence them to work for him cordially; thus, it can be identified as his completely practical approach to labor. As Richard Godden states that:

Sutpen's belief in the abrasive primacy of his "primary fire" cannot entirely disguise the suspicion that, in getting into the ring in the first place, he has compromised his own "domination", that is to say his own whiteness (Godden 690).

According to Godden, Sutpen compromises his 'domination' or 'whiteness' by being one of his coworkers by 'getting into the ring in the first place' but he does more than that by following their norms in boxing matches and also by working across them. However, all of those activities were his practically because they were realistically related to labor management.

Following that, Faulkner depicts another effect of Sutpen's participation as his practicality because it increases the energy level of his coworkers as this competition encourages manhood among the participants, which was reflected in their practical work. Martin mentions:

He further influences their behavior by demonstrating his physical prowess and courage in corporal battles (Martin 409).

Sutpen's participation, according to Martin, influences his coworkers' behavior through his valor and bravery because his heroism earns him honor as a leader, and having respect, loyalty, and obedience are highly significant factors in the efficiency of teamwork which is seen while working in the plantation. Martin further remarks:

By reinforcing his physical ability and power, employ a further strategy to dominate psychologically and thus more successfully exploit the men he enslaves (Martin 409).

Sutpen's work ethic and courage influence his workers, allowing him to psychologically control them, which is extremely beneficial for practical work. Besides, he provides an opportunity for them to have recreation through this entertaining event, which aids in the development of the owner's relationship and bonding with the workers.

However, Faulkner demonstrates Sutpen's practicality as highly efficient as it works to entertain them while also establishing equality, developing the owner-worker relationship, encouraging and motivating them to work possibly harder, and thus established as realistic. His participation in the fighting game, on the other hand, is unconventional and unusual to the prevailing Southern attitudes, and thus a little beyond their thinking. Indeed, Faulkner's intention is highly successful in subtly introducing the entertaining event while establishing Sutpen's transcendentalism "a little beyond realistic".

4. Human Weaknesses

Faulkner establishes Sutpen's heroism as transcendental along with some human weaknesses, which makes his character realistic as well as "a little beyond". Emerson states:

There is no pure Transcendentalist; that we know of none but prophets and heralds of such a philosophy; that all who by strong bias of nature have leaned to the spiritual side in doctrine, have stopped short of their goal. We have had many harbingers and forerunners; but of a purely spiritual life, history has afforded no example (Emerson, 1940 92).

According to Emerson, in our society, there is no existence of a pure transcendental person and aside from prophets; there is no illustration of a pure spiritual person among human beings who can reach his goal of being stable on purity. In depicting Sutpen's character, Faulkner portrays the same concept of transcendentalism by imbuing him with some human flaws in parallel to his heroic qualities. Although those human weaknesses undermine the protagonist's heroic qualities, they at the same time make the protagonist's character realistic following Emerson's statement 'there is no pure

transcendentalist' among us as naturally, imperfection is inevitable in humans.

With the cultural flow of the American south, Sutpen also shows a racial attitude, especially toward his first wife and son. Patricia Tobin states:

Herein lies the congruence of Sutpen's design and Southern tradition: Both depend for their ends upon a family that is a pure white, male dynasty (Tobin 263).

Like other common people in the nineteenth-century American south, he follows the contemporary white male dominating racial social norm in which most white people believe that any wrongdoings could be committed against black people. Shreve mentions, "You knew that you could hit them, he told Grandfather, and they would not hit back or even resist" (171). The words "you knew" implies that it is known and established that white people are allowed to not only dominate but also torture black people. On the other hand, despite their objections, black people have become accustomed to and accepted torture. Sutpen realizes this as well and embraces the privilege of the race-discriminated social norm.

After migrating to the West Indies Sutpen works as an overseer on a plantation and, after putting down a slave revolt, is offered the hand of the plantation owner's daughter, Eulalia Bon and he marries her. However, Eulalia gives birth to a son, Charles Bon. Sutpen does not realize Eulalia is of the mixed race until after the marriage and birth of Charles, but when he realizes the truth, he thinks that he has been duped. The reason for his realization is society's dominant white male-dominant culture, in which a white man having and maintaining a black family is not socially prestigious or acceptable, and leaving them was a more convenient option for him. So, he declares the marriage null and void and abandons his wife and son. Richard Godden states, "Sutpen breaks his marriage when he learns that Eulalia is black" (704). Tobin states the consequence of Sutpen's racism as:

In *Absalom, Absalom!* marital and familial bonds cannot survive any conflict involving racial considerations. Because of "black blood," a wife is discarded, a son orphaned, a brother murdered, a sister widowed. (Tobin 263).

Sutpen's single racial attempt results in suffering not only for his first partly black family but also for his offspring from a second pure white family, and most of the members of both families are eventually spoiled. Here Faulkner depicts the evidence of gradual racial mix-

up in American society along with the racial norms; for instance, Eulalia is partly black, therefore, Charles is a child from a partly black mother and a pure white father, Sutpen. Eulalia, on the other hand, is disgracefully rejected, depriving her of the right to a wife and a normal familial life. Charles is raised as an orphan before being murdered by his stepbrother, Henry Sutpen, after falling in love with his step-sister, Judith Sutpen. As a consequence, Henry is charged with murder in the eyes of the law, and Judith lives her life as a widow until death for her lost love. Sutpen's racism toward 'black blood' is the most significant reason for all of these devastations.

Furthermore, Sutpen's racial approach is evident in dealing with his two sons. When Charles at his mature age came to 'Sutpen's Hundred' with Henry, he showed the same racial approach with his black son as he faced the planter's door. Tobin States:

And when years later another young boy knocks at Sutpen's door, he refuses entrance to his own son because he is part Negro. For all the rhetoric of morality in which Sutpen dresses his "design," it began and ended in racial insult (Tobin 264).

Sutpen, even after a long time, doesn't show any pity or sympathy after getting back his son despite being his biological father where the question of regret is far away rather, he wants to get rid of him. Tobin

compares Charles' situation to Supen's humiliating experience at the planter's door. Furthermore, by addressing his design as a racial insult from start to finish, Tobin subtly labels Sutpen as a "lifetime racist." On the contrary, he acts like an ideal father figure to Henry. Sutpen is never seen as emotional and loving throughout the whole novel except once while facing his son Henry. Once, Sutpen and Henry had a conflict and he left home as well as his birthright. Miss Rosa states, "I saw Henry repudiate his home and birthright" (11). The fact is when the father and son meet together after a certain time; an emotional atmosphere is created between them. Faulkner states:

It is the older man who moves first, though they meet in the center of the tent, where they embrace and kiss before Henry is aware that he has moved, was going to move, moved by what of close blood which in the reflex instant abrogates and reconciles even though it does not yet (perhaps never will) forgive.... —Henry, Sutpen says—My son (262).

Here it is observed that Sutpen's approach is quite fatherly toward Henry. On the other hand, when Henry comes back to Charles from their father and he asks him whether his father has sent any words for him but he doesn't get any answer. Once his pain came out saying "He didn't need to tell you I am a nigger to stop me" (265). His heart is broken not only by the loss of his father's love, but also by the blackness

that Sutpen has made him feel. Sutpen's statement from the same meeting reveals yet another significant piece of evidence of his racist attitude. He has to reveal his past and Charles's birth history to explain to Henry why he has rejected Charles and Judith's marriage. He stated:

His mother's father told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman. I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part Negro (263).

His spontaneous statement demonstrates that he has no guilt or regret for his racist attitude rather he presents it as his legal and logical approach.

Furthermore, his human weakness is apparent in his interactions with women, where he also adheres to male-dominant social norms not only for black women but also for white women. His second marriage to Ellen Coldfield is not for love or for a normal conjugal life rather is an attempt to execute a part of his design. Miss Rosa states:

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 (8).

Sutpen's second marriage is intended to provide him with a social identity and thus establish his position in Jefferson town, as well as to produce a son who would be a pure white inheritor. He treats Ellen as if she is an object rather than a wife. Tobin states:

His abandonment of his first wife has a certain cash value, which he discharges; and his acquisition of the second wife, along with the unimpeachable respectability her family has earned over the years, becomes exactly equivalent to his purchase of ornate Italian furnishings for his new home (Tobin 262).

There is no evidence of Sutpen's emotional attachment to Ellen, therefore it can be said that he uses her to establish his social status and keeps her as a decoration piece.

Sutpen's male-dominating approach is seen in his physical involvement with another Negro slave woman on his plantation. He only does it to satisfy his physical need, and as a result, the woman gives birth to his daughter, Clytie. He is assured that the woman and

his daughter will never raise their voices to assert their rights due to the prevalent racist and patriarchal social norms. His male dominating arrogance appears to be at its peak in his statement to Milly Jones, who has a sexual relationship with him at the age of fifteen and gives birth to a daughter. Sutpen says:

Well, Milly, too bad you're not a mare like Penelope. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable (138).

Sutpen's attitude exceeds the tolerance of Milly's grandfather, Wash Jones, who eventually kills him for the offense he committed against his teenage granddaughter.

However, Sutpen's racial approach is demonstrated differently when dealing with the Negro slaves on the plantation, where he never displays any superior attitude. His material advantage is the reason for the disparity in his racial attitude. He desires the best possible outcome from teamwork, and that's why he keeps his coworkers mentally stable and inspired. His male-dominant approach, on the other hand, is the same for both white and black women. Therefore, it is evident that he has not only been a racist throughout his whole life but also demonstrates a discrepancy attitude even within racism. The protagonist's human flaw or transcendentalism's impurity is his distinct

racial approach, through which Faulkner establishes his platform as "a little beyond but realistic" and followed Emerson's statement on "imperfection of transcendentalists".

5. Conclusion

Emerson states regarding transcendental heroes:

They are exercised in their own spirit with queries, which acquaint them with all adversity, and with the trials of the bravest heroes (Emerson, 1940 99).

In the same way, Faulkner subtly represents Sutpen's transcendental heroic features, in Emerson's word 'spirits' through the protagonist's free will and labor in becoming acquainted with the remarkably challenging situations which are evidenced as "a little beyond realistic".

Sutpen, as an innate hero, observes, analyzes, and then acts in accordance with the needs of the situation whenever he encounters difficulties or crises, and his actions elevates him to the status of transcendental hero. He is never witnessed seeking help from others, nor was he is seen lowering his head regardless of the situation; he acts as he is self-sufficient. His perception of the material world is beyond the thinking capacity of the common people. Emerson states:

He does not deny the presence of this table, this chair, and the

walls of this room, but he looks at these things as the reverse side of the tapestry, as the other end, which nearly concerns him (Emerson, 1940 88).

Following Emerson's statement, Sutpen can observe the factors "as the reverse side of the tapestry" which is firstly seen in his perception of the humiliating incident at the planter's door. This is the reason why he couldn't accept the Negro slave's command simply rather his extreme reaction shows that he can understand the deeper meaning of that. He spent the next entire night subtly understanding the entire situation, then analyzing the pinpoint of the incident, and finally acting accordingly, which is not common for ordinary people and thus "a little beyond" the capacity of the average person at that very young age. At his mature age, his observation of the reverse side can be seen in many of his activities, for instance, in his language learning, initiating new labor management even his arranging boxing matches. Due to his exceptional observation skills, such initiatives brought him the greatest possible success.

However, in portraying Sutpen's heroism, Faulkner subtly introduces four narrators, Quentin, his father, his grandfather, and Miss Rosa. Regarding Sutpen's moral and ethical issues, they each represent him from a different perspective, both positive and negative; for example, Quentin's grandfather judges him from a neutral standpoint based on what he has witnessed and heard from Sutpen himself, and his father

simply explains what he could learn from his grandfather, Miss Rosa represent him with hatred because she and her sister are mistreated by him, and Quentin analyzes all of the information collected from them to realize the truth. However, the most significant point is, in the case of his heroic features, they all recognize him as a hero. Even Miss Rosa undoubtedly praises his bravery, efficiency in other words heroism. She states "Oh, he was brave" (12). Her statement has high significance in this regard because Faulkner represents her with extreme hatred for the protagonist who possesses no respect at all for Sutpen but can't deny his heroism. The citizens of the Jefferson town have the same impression about him although they are doubtful or confused about his activities. Therefore, Supen's heroism is recognized not only by his contemporary generation, but also by subsequent generations. Shreve and Quentin are Harvard scholars who conducted research on Sutpen's autobiography by collecting information from their previous generation after the protagonist's death (Sutpen died in 1869, Quentin and Shreve were born in 1891 & 1890 respectively). The main reason for their efforts was his heroic rise from the bottom to the top.

From another point of view, it can be stated that, naturally and realistically, Sutpen should possess this lack of sensitivity, emotional values, and family bonding because he lacks family education, and also there was no family bond in the family he belonged to. This is how Faulkner decorates the whole platform logically step by step and he

is highly successful in establishing his protagonist's transcendentalism realistically, in parallel "a little beyond".

Overall, Faulkner portrays Sutpen's lifelong transcendental heroism through his "design" or plan which is made in his adolescent age, and then his driving immeasurable free will and taking heroic action or labor that elevates his position. In parallel, to make the platform more realistic, the writer imposes some human flaws, as naturally all humans are born with flaws or weaknesses regardless of their personality. Regarding Sutpen's human flaws, it can be argued that, naturally and realistically, Sutpen logically lacks sensitivity, emotional values, and family bonding because he lacks family education and there was no family bond in the family he belonged to. Faulkner decorates the entire platform logically and precisely in this manner.

However, in establishing his protagonist as a transcendental hero, Faulkner subtly follows one of the transcendentalists' leaders, Emerson's 'transcendentalism. Indeed, Faulkner is highly successful in portraying Sutpen's transcendentalism through his perceptions of the physical world, his free will as well as his actions or labor, which are "a little beyond realistic".

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Abstract

My research examines William Faulkner's transcendentalism as "a little beyond" which is initiated by one of the leading transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner's protagonist Thomas Sutpen is an American transcendental hero. Faulkner establishes Sutpen's transcendentalism in this novel by depicting his free will and his attitude toward labor which are "a little beyond realistic." Aside from the transcendental heroic characteristics, the author imposes some humanistic weaknesses on Sutpen, which realistically establishes the protagonist as a transcendental hero. This research investigates Sutpen's free will which drives him to make a "design". In other words, his free will takes him from the lowest level to the peak of society which is a little beyond the mindset of the common people and therefore transcendental. Sutpen's attitude to labor is also depicted as a little beyond the capacity of his surrounding ordinary people, as evidenced by his participation in extremely hard labor with his Negro slaves while planting a hundred square miles of virgin land and building an ostentatious mansion named "Sutpen's Hundred." His involvement breaks the conventional labor law and he initiates a highly successful reformed labor law which is a little beyond realistic. In parallel, by imposing human weaknesses in Sutpen, Faulkner follows the Emersonian transcendental concept of imperfection of transcendentalism. Altogether his free will, labor, and weaknesses established his transcendentalism as "a little beyond realistic".

한글초록

나의 연구는 대표적인 초월주의자 중 한 사람인 랄프 왈도 에머슨에 의해 시작된 초월주의를 윌리엄 포크너의 “조금넘어서”에 의미를 두고 분석한다. 포크너의 압살롬, 압살롬에서 주인공인 토마스 서트펜은 미국의 초월적 영웅이다. 포크너는 이 작품에서 서트펜의 자유의지와 노동에 대한 태도를 “현실에서 조금넘어서” 것으로 묘사함으로써 그의 초월주의를 확립한다. 작가는 서트펜에게 초월적인 영웅의 특성뿐만 아니라 인간적인 약점을 부여함으로써 주인공을 현실에 근거한 초월적 영웅으로 설정한다. 본 연구는 서트펜으로 하여금 “설계” 하도록 몰아가는 그의 자유의지에 대하여 탐색한다. 즉, 그의 자유의지는 그를 사회의 최하층에서 최고위층으로 끌어올리며, 이는 보통 사람들의 사고방식을 조금넘어서는 초월적인 자유의지이다. 백 평방마일의 미개척지를 개간하고 “서트펜의 헨드레드”라고 명명한 화려한 저택을 짓는 극도로 고된 노동에 흑인 노예들과 함께 참여함으로써 증명되는 서트펜의 노동에 대한 태도 역시 주변에 있는 보통 사람들의 역량을 조금넘어서는 것으로 묘사된다. 그가 관여하면 전통적인 노동법은 무시되고, 현실을 조금넘어서는 매우 성공적으로 개혁된 노동법이 시작된다. 동시에 서트펜에게 인간적 약점을 부여함으로써 포크너는 에머슨의 이 가진 초월에 대한 개념인 초월주의의 불완전함을 이어간다. 그의 자유의지, 노동, 그리고 약점은 “현실을 조금넘어서는” 것으로서의 초월주의를 확립했다.