



## AMERICAN ECONOMIC HARDSHIP IN *GO DOWN MOSES* BY WILLIAM FAULKNER

**Muhammad Fiqri Ichsan**

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Andalas Padang

email: [fiqriich.student.sasingunand@gmail.com](mailto:fiqriich.student.sasingunand@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This research investigates the representation of rural life in America in *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner, especially in their economic mindset because most of the people in the village have a unique mindset that they have to move to the big city to get more successful. This analysis would like to give a new perspective on this mindset that people in the village can utilize the land in their village to get more money to get more successful they do not need to move to the bigger city for they can use their land by husbandry, agriculture, and fishery. The research used American Pastoral theory and the theory of ecocriticism. *Go Down Moses* is a novel with seven different stories, and each story with a different conflict in each story and the investigation will focus on the background and setting of the Environment in the story. And it will give the reader a new insight into utilizing land, especially in the village. This research is important to invite people awareness of utilizing the land for their living and throw away the wrong mindset that we have to move to the big city to get a better life.

Kata Kunci: *American pastoral, ecocriticism, American rural life, American hardship*

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many people who live in villages always feel left behind by people who live in the cities, so they choose to go too far away from their hometown and move to the cities to get a better life. This is the wrong mindset. We can use the land in the village to produce more material than life in the city. We just have to understand how to use the land in the village, for example, using the fields for gardening, farming, raising livestock, or using the sea to make ponds or fishing. In American context of wars, working women increased from 12 million to 18.6 million throughout the conflict. About half of all women had jobs outside the home. The ladies who put in long hours on farms were not included in that figure. Labor was in short supply on farms and in cities due to a large number of men and women serving in the military. A large number of rural women worked in the war factories. Those who remained operated tractors and vehicles, and their to-do list increased (Hopkins 1).

*Go Down Moses* teaches the readers on how benefit from land. It tells them that it depends on how they use the existing land. This paper will discuss how people can utilize the

land, especially in William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*. In these conditions, literary criticism is likewise compelled to investigate human interaction to recover nature from human disaster. Rueckert defines ecocriticism as the application of ecology or ecological concepts to the analysis of literature. Additionally, ecocriticism is described by Lawrence Buell as "a study of the relationship between literature and the environment carried out in a spirit of dedication to environmentalist action" (The Environmental Imagination, 430).

Because there are many wrong mindsets of people in rural areas, they think that if they move from the village to the city, they will get a better life whereas if they already understand how to use a large amount of land in the countryside, they can get a decent life. The city even promotes the village as well as opens up various job opportunities in the village and makes the village develop. To get rid of that mindset, the research will focus on how to increase people's awareness of utilizing the land in the village as an intermediary to develop life in the village and also provide ways to use it, such as farming, raising livestock, or gardening.

This study will use American pastoral theory from William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*. Pastoral is a literary work that describes an idealized version of rural life. The study will compare life in the village and the city by focusing on nature based on *Go Down Moses*. The word 'pastoral' is used in literature to characterize rural concerns and aspects of life among shepherds, cowherds, and other agricultural laborers, which are frequently romanticized and greatly exaggerated in depictions. Founded in Western culture that focused on the disparities between urban and rural life, from Greg Gerrard's ecocriticism book (2014). According to Gerrard, there are three types of pastoralism represented. The first one is classic pastoral. It is distinguished by nostalgia and appreciation of nature as a place for humans to relax and reflect (Gerrard 37). The second one is romantic pastoral, a period after the industrial revolution in which the countryside is seen as an implicit or explicit contrast to the city (Gerrard 42). The third one is American pastoral, an ecological approach founded in Western culture that focuses on the disparities between urban and rural life (Gerrard 49). This study will show the reader a new perspective on environmental damage, especially in William Faulkner's book *Go Down Moses*. It focuses on American Pastoral theory to see how people take advantage of existing land in William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*. In Pastoral Forms and Attitudes, Bipolar oppositions, which "permeate the pastoral tradition from one epoch to the next but tend to elicit distinct potentials from the pastoral setting according to how they are opposed," are used in pastoral work, according to Harold Toliver, Scholars of American Studies are likely best familiar with these differences in the form that they are presented in *The Machine in the Garden*. The

renowned research by Leo Marx outlines the bipolar oppositions in American pastoralism (Hunt 40).

In *Go Down Moses*, William Faulkner has a concern for the environment, but he doesn't show it directly by looking at the background of the book where the story takes place and how the characters in the book use the existing land. In this study, the focus is on the depiction of the land in the village, comparing how Americans in 1962 used the land in rural areas with modern Americans today in using rural land. The analysis will center on two main questions. First, what do Americans do for a living in *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner? Most of them were a farmer, ranchers, and hunters. You can read this fact in the *Go Down Moses: the fire and the hearth, the older people, and the Delta autumn* story. Second, how does William Faulkner invite people to utilize vacant land in the countryside? William Faulkner creates a lot of conflict in *Go Down Moses*, and most of them it's about the Environment around the character, so we can see indirectly William Faulkner shows us the reader that people want to utilize their land through the conflict.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Literary critics can examine literary works from many angles, either qualitatively or quantitatively, by using various methodologies and theories, according to Ferdinal, Seswita, and Sandika (2020). This analysis applied an ecocriticism approach. Literary academics examine writings that highlight environmental concerns and the various ways literature handles the subject of nature through the multidisciplinary field of ecocriticism, which studies literature and the environment. The focus of this study is not only on nature but also on the economy and the culture of the American people in *Go Down Moses*. According to Lawrence Buell, there are two waves of ecocriticism. The first generation of ecocritics concentrated on wilderness fiction, nature poetry, and writing about nature (Buell 138). They used to uphold the philosophy of organism. Environment effectively means natural Environment (Buell 21). The environmental catastrophe has caused an imagination crisis, necessitating the search for fresh perspectives on nature and how humans fit within it. The Environmental Imagination, the largest research to date on how literature depicts the natural Environment, sets out to address this problem. Using Thoreau's *Walden* as a reference point, Buell gives us a thorough survey of environmental awareness, the role that nature has played in the advancement of western thought, and the implications for literary studies of trying to imagine a more "ecocentric" way of being. As a

result, he offers a significant new interpretation of Thoreau's accomplishment and, concurrently, prompts a profound reevaluation of our literary and cultural meditations on nature.

This research used the American pastoral theory by Lawrence Buell. What has boosted Thoreau's reputation among American readers is the domesticated image of him as a literary naturalist as opposed to the image of him as an economic/political revolutionary. Though initially his renown in Britain and Europe was what made him famous, that fact also eventually proved to be significant. The first academic or popular American discussion that considers "Resistance to Civil Government" just as important as *Walden* is found in John Macy's *The Spirit of American Literature* (1913), which also happens to be the first full-scale reading of the American literary tradition in terms of the now-commonplace theme that the great American writers ought to be defined in terms of their anti-establishmentarianism. For the first time, Thoreau's notoriety in America was certain.

Up to that moment, it appeared that the American public had come to accept Thoreau's viewpoint as an interpreter of nature rather than as a preacher of nonconformity, according to one of the two devoted bird watchers who coedited *Thoreau's Journals* (1906). Literature fashions historical images. As a result, as society evolves and looks back at these representations, it perceives its presence as a throwback to the simple life of the past. This theory focuses on life in the village, which has begun to be replaced by urban life, with people thinking today that living in the village is a setback. However, there is still a lot of potential to be developed. And this study will provide a new perspective on rural life.

## REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Glen A. Love's book, *Et in Arcadia Ego: Pastoral Theory Meets Ecocriticism*, claims that, along with Marx, other contemporary critics including Lawrence Bull, Andrew Ettin, and William Howarth support the assertion that pastoralism is still relevant today. In "Pastoralism in America." According to Ettin, "the term pastoral denotes events and ideas that are permanent components of our thinking and writing, like the phrases tragedy and comedy" (1).

A journal article by Gabriela Glavan uses the American Pastoral philosophy in another study (2012). Glavan looks at tragic innocence in *American Pastoral* by Philip Roth. The tragic aspect of innocence can be addressed in *American Pastoral* concerning the two major protagonists, Seymour Levov and his daughter Merry. The novel's major themes—such as the

pastoral or the American Dream—are viewed from a broader perspective by the notion of innocence, revealing some of their subtler undertones.

The subtle importance tragic innocence bears when applied to the two people in question is also revealed by a closer examination of the topic. History "crushes" both characters, but in different ways and with distinct results (the modern but the similarly vengeful equivalent of destiny). The novel's true tragic component comes from Merry's expulsion from her father's pastoral American Dream and her development into a fanatic and bomber (252). In addition to being an elegiac fictional biography, *American Pastoral* provides a thorough examination of how the American ideal perished in the wake of post-World War II social and cultural changes.

The primary characters of the book, Seymour "Swede" Levov and his daughter Merry, replicate this process in a nuanced and profound fashion that mimics the tragic fabled Fall from Paradise. In *American Pastoral*, Merry plays the attractive, benevolent Swede, the furious, messy, overweight daughter of Dawn Dwyer, Miss New Jersey 1949, and the bomber in a house of harmony. Merry is likewise the laughably deformed offspring of a prosperous, advanced, and accomplished family. The auctorial mind, as represented by Zuckerman, is never able to fully explain Merry's irrational conduct and the Swede's probable contribution to her terrible subsequent decisions, simply because there is a large web of causality and causes that caused it all to happen.

However, there is a crucial hint as to when serious deviance might have taken place (243). Glen wants to show readers that he is concerned about the environment and how humans may exist with environmental conditions that continue to deteriorate every day by employing American pastoral settings. In his book, Glen educates readers on how urban living compromises nature because of human needs and pollution that wreaks havoc on the environment. It is believed that *American Pastoral* philosophy will offer a fresh viewpoint on our existing environment and raise public awareness of the environment, encouraging people to think about using unoccupied land in their communities for economic purposes rather than traveling to the city.

The following study examines *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner as it appears in a journal kept by Narullah Mambrol. *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner: analysis. Ike's withdrawal is handled sympathetically by Faulkner, but he later reveals in the story "Delta Autumn" that the family's discriminatory heritage has persisted uninterrupted. In his most recent search, which is from the 1940s, Ike comes across a fascinating woman searching for his great-nephew Roth. It comes out that she is black (in actuality, she is the great-granddaughter

of Tomey's Turl), although her skin does not betray it, and that her eloping lover is Roth, just like in a dream. Ike observes the futility of his endeavor to flee as he looks at the miscegenation that is occurring, the non-acknowledgment of the 1940s echoing that of the 1830s.

The final narrative, *Go Down Moses*, which is about the ceremonial return of the body of the black Samuel Worsham Beauchamp to his distraught southern family, also has futility as its theme. Samuel had previously been "exiled" from the plantation by Roth for theft. The young man had gone to the urban North, turned to crime, and was eventually apprehended and put to death. The family of Samuel waits for the body to be returned while chanting about how Roth expelled Samuel for betraying him to the pharaoh—" 'Sold him in Egypt and now he dead.' 'Oh yes, Lord. Sold him in Egypt'" (363). Assume that this 150-year history is unable to imagine black life being liberated from the control of the white Pharaoh. The community (both white and black) taking one of their own homes to be laid to rest at least respects the sadness of the black death in that situation. *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner comes to an end on this ceremonial somber note.

There is interconnectedness between effect, environment, and discourse in Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*. Throughout the different episodes of the collection, the characters' feelings of belonging and attachment to nature create communal and individual well-being. However, with the coming of industrialization, everything degrades, including home and feelings. When the wilderness, as a source of spirituality, is swept away, the characters' ethical values decay accordingly. Despite all these changes, characters attached to the land, such as Isaac McCaslin, remain passive and do not react. As Faulkner states, readers might dislike Ike's attitude of remaining passive, though not participating in the destruction (Larouz 33). This writing shows the connection between environmental concerns in *Go Down Moses*. There are a few interviews with William Faulkner. The process of him makes the background in the novel feel like reality in America Nature, and the Environment is so detailed, so we cannot just focus on the conflict of the story, but we can also focus on the nature that William Faulkner serves to us the reader and the background of the novel will be the focus in my research.

The study of American literature, which has been done in a spirit of advocacy for democratic and natural ideals, is the most significant setting for Buell's adoption of realism. In contrast to the artificial and hierarchical ideals of their European equivalent and antecedent, values are frequently seen as being the same. This is especially evident when studying the American Renaissance, the pre-Civil War era in which Buell is the foremost authority, and when

American writers were most committed to democratic/natural ideas (Phillips 586). This research by Philips reveals how to figure out the ecocriticism theory from Buell.

*Here is the justification for Faulkner's well-known literary style, which is a careless onslaught of carelessly punctuated and occasionally a grammatical rhetoric, ornate and occasionally perplexing diction meant to defeat ordinary sense, and endless sentences meant to triumph over time. The author indicates that the story mimicks nature, which also exists and encompasses everything, including art and nature go together. They must be because the postbellum south's profit-driven culture is consuming an increasing amount of nature, leaving art as the only global reservoir of values that have not been corrupted by the curse that the region's white residents have placed on it (Pistelli 3).* This article shows how the reader of *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner was amazed by the nature that he wrote into the novel, but there is still a lack of research that focuses on nature in *Go Down Moses*.

*This book does not focus on nature but on political conflicts, racism, greed, etc. But when the author reads this book, the background described by William Faulkner is very interesting, as if *Go Down Moses* told the environmental conditions in America in 1942. Hence, the cave from the author in entering this research is that readers can also know how the story goes. This book is also a combination of seven stories that have no blessing at all and have different conflicts in each story. Sarah Gleeson White's analysis of William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses: An American Frontier Narrative*.*

*William Faulkner flew to Cleveland, Mississippi, in 1952 to give a speech to a group of business people and plantation owners in the Delta. In the speech he gave that day, he "... sounded at first something like a Mississippi farmer, perhaps a descendant of those "tall men" he depicts in an earlier eponymous short tale; that is, a successor to the frontier heritage of rugged individualism and the tough existence. In reality, Faulkner laments the loss of these very virtues in this address and holds up Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed as the preferable "old robust, sturdy models" both actual and imaginary, as well as southern culture (45).*

The last research shows that there is nothing in *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner that relates to nature, but the story and the conflict it's all about nature. The writing will focus on the background of the story of how American people lived in 1942 and how people can provide a new view of the benefits that can be obtained in the village by gardening, farming, and animal husbandry because so far many have underestimated life in the village and are considered as a failure if living in the village.

Many scientists, engineers, government officials, and civilians expected constant innovation in the future as a result of the war's rapid gains in science and technology, which continued and intensified tendencies that had started during the Great Depression. Some Americans were concerned that the depression would return after the war because of the significant increases in personal income and quality of life that frequently, if not always, occurred during the conflict, just as many Americans anticipated long-lasting. Last but not least of all, the war's worldwide reach severely damaged every significant economy except of the United States, which went on to enjoy immense economic and political strength after 1945. (Tassava 3). All of this shows the readers the economy during the launch of *Go Down Moses*, and it will show you how the American people did to survive during this year.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The collection of stories titled *Go Down Moses* was penned by William Faulkner in 1942. He was born in New Albany, Mississippi, on September 25, 1897, and passed away there on July 6, 1962. He was an American author of short stories and novels who won the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature. William Faulkner has done many works in the field of literature and published many very inspirational novels and poems such as *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), *Mosquitoes* (1927), *Go Down Moses* (1962), etc. *Go Down Moses* is a novel that has seven stories that are not related to each other but William Faulkner asked *Go Down Moses* to be a novel by equating the names of the characters in each story. And also, most of William Faulkner's works do not discuss or mention environmental issues. Still, in the book *Go Down Moses*, the focus is the Environment and how they use the existing land because the novel's background is in a village. It will be a good reference for how to utilize the Environment. Most of William Faulkner's works are rated as works that discuss racial issues, and very few critics discuss the Environment of William Faulkner's works. But recently, research from an ecological perspective has increased drastically. However, in this study, from an ecological perspective, no one has discussed the environmental differences in cities and villages that can provide a new and useful perspective on real life.

This study aims to increase a sense of concern for the environment because the environment is where we live, and our lives also depend on the environment. If we can't take care of the Environment, then we will not get a good life, but if we can take care of the Environment. The environment, then we will get a good quality of life. Despite the challenges they faced, American farmers increased the amount of cropland they harvested during the war,



increasing the amount of harvested maize, wheat, and oats acres by 9%, 15%, and 22% between 1940 and 1945, according to statistics gathered under the Census of Agriculture (Mercier 3).

By looking at the perspective of life in the village, the book aims to provide perspectives that have never been thought of before about the point of view of life in the village, which has begun to be less interesting than life in the city. Life in the village is no longer attractive to the community because of the lack of adequate facilities for a decent life in the village, and also difficult access is one of the factors that life in the village is no longer attractive. With this research, it is hoped that the government will pay more attention to facilities for villages because for equitable progress, facilities that are equivalent to cities and villages are needed because life in the village is also useful for a balance of life without living in our village, it will be difficult to get vegetables, meats, and fruits. The facilities above are schools, transportation, and even technology if all of these can be fulfilled for life in the village, the people will be interested in living in the village.

How life was in America in 1942 and what people did for a living should be able to show the readers the potential of the lands. Like some of those who live in the village, there are gardening, farming, and livestock, not only focusing on life in the village but also on the climate and weather there based on the data in the novel *Go Down Moses* by William Faulkner. And how the characters in the book use the empty land as their livelihood, and how American pastoral knowledge can be useful.

## CONCLUSION

Nowadays, many individuals who live in villages often feel left behind by those who live in cities. Many decide to migrate far from home to find a better life in the city. Using the land in the village to produce more material than life in the city is possible, but you must know how to do it. For instance, they can utilize the fields for farming, raising cattle, or gardening, or they can use the sea to create ponds or go fishing. It all depends on how they utilize the currently available land. This essay talks about how people may do that, particularly in William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*. Given these circumstances, literary criticism is also obligated to look into human interactions that help nature recover from human calamity.

They believe that "if they migrate from the village to the city, then they would get a better life" because many rural residents still have incorrect ideas. Still, suppose they already know how to utilize the expansive quantity of land in the countryside. In that case, they may acquire a modest living. The city office even promotes the community, which also helps the hamlet grow

by creating a variety of job opportunities there. This writing concentrates on improving people's knowledge of using village land as a bridge to improve village life and on ways to use it, such as farming, raising livestock, or gardening, to dispel that perspective. The phrase "pastoral" in literature refers to rural issues and aspects of life among shepherds, cowherds, and other agricultural laborers that are occasionally romanticized and extremely exaggeratedly represented.

## REFERENCES

- Buell, Lawrance. 1996. *The Environmental Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- Buell, Lawrance. 1989. *American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Custard, Glynn. 2014. *Revisiting the Classics: Rereading William Faulkner's Go Down Moses*. United States.
- Ferdinal, Seswita, and Edria Sandika. (2020). *Introduction to Literary Studies*. Padang: PJ Publishing.
- Garrard, Greg. 2014. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge.
- Hopkins, Mildred. 1950. *Farming in the 1940s*. <https://livinghistoryfarm.org>.
- Hunt, Patricia. 1982. *North American Pastoral: Contrasting Images of gardens in Canadian and American*. United States.
- Laouruz, Muhammad. 2021. *Affect, Environment, and Discourse in William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses*, University Moulay Islami.
- Love, Glan A. 1992. *Et in Arcadia Ego: Pastoral Theory Meets Ecocriticism*. United States.
- Mambrol, Narullah. 2021. *Analysis of William Faulkner's Go Down Moses*. Indonesia.
- Mercier, Stephanie. 2021. *Agriculture during Wartime: The Ingenuity of American Farmers During World War II*. United States.
- Phillips, Dana. 2014. *Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology*. The John Hopkins University Press.
- Pistelli, John. 2018. *William Faulkner, Go Down Moses*. United States.
- Specq, François. 2016. *Thoreau's Journal or the Workshop of Being*. Wayne State University Press.
- Tassava, Christopher J. 2003. *The American Economy During the World War II*, United States.
- White, Sarah Gleeson. 2009. *William Faulkner's Go Down Moses: An American Frontier Narrative*. United States.