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Impacts of Miscegenation in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

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Letter of Approval

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Sutpen's Miscegenation in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

Abstract

This paper explores the guilt consciousness of a white man, primarily emanating from his past interracial marriage with a black woman, within the context of antebellum racism in the American South in William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!. The central character Sutpen and his son Henry have a sense of dark vision of human conduct beset by the guilt of miscegenation that can't be forgiven. In the novel, sense of guilt, taken as a sinful act of defiance, leads to a tragic end of their lives and the subsequent fall out of Sutpen's ambition of creating a dynasty in Faulkner's fictive landscape, Jackson, Mississippi. Before Civil War and Lincoln's emancipation, there were laws prohibiting interracial marriages. Although such laws were annulled in the early twentieth century South, the past actions came back to haunt. Anti-miscegenation laws had aim to prevent degeneration of the higher races through legal control. Whites considered themselves as superior to the black and stood against interracial marriages. Sutpen overcame the sense of guilt because of his connection with "Negro" blooded son and wife; he repudiated them and refused to have marital affair of Bon and his daughter Judith. When Sutpen revealed his inter-connection with Negro man Bon, Henry displayed outrages had an extreme sense of guilt consciousness and considered it to be true and his relationship with black, which he considered was unwanted and because of which he is continuously vilified. This sense of guilt troubled him and he tried to come out from it but couldn't, and eventually killed Charles Bon. In this dissertation, I have shown the devastating effects of sin in the guilt-ridden characters who expiate it through suffering.

Keywords: miscegenation, mulatto, guilt-consciousness, racial amalgamation, race purity, doom and damnation.

In this research paper, I have analyzed how racial amalgamation became a devastating issue during the antebellum period and created a moral problem as portrayed in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner presents multiple narratives of a "white trash" man, Thomas Sutpen who was born and raised in West Virginia and moves to Jefferson, Mississippi aiming to gain wealth and become a powerful man of the family. It begins with the narration of Rosa; sister of Sutpen's second wife, and then followed by Quentin and Sutpen himself. In the novel, Sutpen purchases land, plants cotton and marries the daughter of a local merchant. Sutpen has a son and a daughter named Henry and Judith from his second wife Ellen. When Henry goes to college, he meets a fellow student named Charles Bon. Later, Charles meets Judith and an engagement between them is assumed. As Sutpen realized, Charles Bon is actually his own son from a previous marriage which he abandoned when he discovered that his wife had Negro blood, he uses his efforts and also influences Henry to get rid of him. Henry responds with outrage and revolts against Bon finally murdering him after knowing from his father that Charles Bon is in part a black man who is going to marry his sister. The grandson of Sutpen's first friend General Compson, a twenty-year-old Quentin Compson is summoned by the sister of Sutpen's wife Rosa Coldfield to hear the story about the destruction of Sutpen's dynasty. After having some discussion on it, Quentin tells it to his Harvard roommate Shreve. Though the sister of Sutpen's wife Rosa tries to return with an ambulance for Henry at last, Clytie, Sutpen's daughter from a slave woman, sets fire to the manor house killing her and Henry, and bringing Sutpen's dynasty to an end.

The son of a Scottish mother and ex-prisoner father, Thomas Sutpen was born in the mountains of West Virginia. A poor white man, Thomas Sutpen had an alcoholic father who suffered a life-changing insult by a black servant. Melvin Backman says, "In 1829, Sutpen got his son and named him Charles Bon- a name ironically reminiscent of Bonnie Prince Charlie, who was heir to a throne he never inherited and prince to a nation that repudiated him"(6). He

renounced his Negro wife and son in 1831 as he was compelled by the planter's design. His marriage to Ellen Coldfield signifies union of frontiersman and racially inferior people. He was the man of courage who came to Jefferson in horses with many slaves. He started producing crops and owning the land. His efforts made him successful to build his dynasty with numbers of slaves. Besides, Sutpen engaged him in war. It was the part of place to perform his bravery. He got high respect from slaves like Wash Jones. Though Sutpen undermined his relation due to racial issue, his heir remained as mentally deficient great-grandson of mixed blood. After discovering the truth that his wife had "Negro" ancestry, Sutpen quit his relation with "Negro" woman and moved to new place.

Faulkner's most of the novels are based on Southern gothic genre. In 1936, he published *Absalom, Absalom* with a dominant theme of extreme pressure of past upon those living in the present. Faulkner is especially known for his interest in Southern history and culture, psychology of characterization, and stylized characters in a moral and social analysis. As Faulkner is associated with modernist and southern gothic literary movements, his thematic approach of writings were southern tradition, community, the land, history and the past, race, and the passions of ambitions and love. According to A. Nicholas Fargnoli, "Faulkner was furiously at work on a new novel, with a title *Absalom, Absalom!* he would borrow from the biblical story of a son of King David who rose against his father" (12). 'Absalom' refers to father of peace and also the third son of David, King of Israel. Absalom eventually rebelled against his father and was killed in the battle. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner explores miscegenation and interracial marriage as a central dramatic issue to show the impossibility of preserving race purity and the protagonist directs his racial prejudice inward against himself and the resulting torment commits him to a violence. Both Sutpen and his son are driven by a strong sense of guilt and a need for some kind of punishment or moral expiation.

Although Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* has been examined from numerous perspectives such as structure, religious morality, narrative perspectives, and biblical background, a study on interracial marriage and overcoming of guilt consciousness is yet to be scrutinized. In other words, it is significant to study the novel to analyze Faulkner's concern in interracial marriage to show the impossibility of race purity, showing how one cannot imagine a single bloodline and how single bigotry related to race-purity leads to doom and damnation. Furthermore, Faulkner's style of writing has contributed to discover textual evidences for significant issues of American literary writings. Despite its numerous findings like my and history, kinship, collapse of dynasty, literary motherhood, slaver and race, American imperialism etc on this novel, it is pivotal to discuss interracial marriage relating to the guilt feelings as reasons behind destruction of Sutpen's dynasty. Multiple narratives of the novel sheds light on Sutpen's past that how did he overcome his guilt feelings and met the tragic end of his life. Though Sutpen is not in the novel's time, characters from the present time remember his past. How a man from White middle class family comes to the Jefferson, builds his dynasty to maintain growth and standard and meets his painful end. Therefore, it is pivotal to explore interracial marriage especially prohibited in U.S as a major cause of destruction of White man's dynasty.

Miscegenation refers to the marriage or sexual relationships between two people from different racial backgrounds resulting in the conception of mixed-race child. To be specific, it is the term especially related to mixed of black blood in the context of U.S. race relation. In other words, it is mixing or blending of a race in marriage or breeding, interracial marriage. According to Peggy Pascoe,

The term "miscegenation" first appeared during the presidential election of 1864, in a pamphlet written by two New York politicians who wanted to replace the older term for interracial sex and marriage, "amalgamation" which they considered inadequate because it had been borrowed from something else. (14)

It was believed that interbreeding between racial or ethnic groups results degeneracy of White people. The first anti-miscegenation laws in the United States actually date back to 1664, banning marriage between whites and slaves, and ordering the enslavement of white women who had married black man. All of total forty-one states imposed law against miscegenation during the following three hundred-plus years. Such miscegenation laws created the boundary lines between black and white. The United States Supreme Court deemed them to be unconstitutional in 1967. The purpose of anti-miscegenation laws was to prevent degeneration of the higher races through legal control. It was widely believed during the 19th century that miscegenation would result in the degeneracy of higher races. According to Nedra Austin;

In 1792 the legislature passed a law jailing and fining interracial married couples and also fining priest who married them. Interracial couples also were punished if they were married out of state to circumvent the law. While the law encouraged extramarital miscegenation, interracial couples were penalized for legitimizing their relationship. (1)

It shows that society was against interracial marriage. In other words, White men had to feel afraid to get exposed their relation. If their interracial marriage gets exposed, they had to pay fine of one hundred dollar and up to six months of imprisonment. Therefore, this fear for legitimizing their relationship created always certain fear and it appeared guilt consciousness upon them. Though marriage is considered to be the prestigious custom of society, it was there white supreme society in southern states to decide whom to marry or not. It used to be considered inappropriate for mixing of blood in white society. One had to maintain their standard in order to get perfect partner and reputation in the society. Marrying a Negro man or woman was considered to be blot for the white people. Austin further says, "Shortage of White women in early colonial days involved white men and Negro Women but fathers were not obligated to support their Mulatto

children or the mothers of their Mulatto children (1)". In this context, 'mulatto' was a child of mixed white and black ancestry, especially a child with one white and one black parent. Though mulatto had to face difficulties in order to get established their rights, they used their efforts to get it in white society. All of the southern states were ensured that social and economic status would not occur between whites and blacks. Whites need to keep in mind their social status before having any relation with black and slave people. Society would not allow illegitimate children born from interracial marriage to inherit. After enforcement of laws against miscegenation, White men's supremacy touched the height as they found everything in their favor. "The laws prohibiting inter-racial marriage promoted and legally substantiated the idea that blacks are not fit for whites to marry because they are socially and physically inferior to whites", says Elise Lemire(13). In a legal way, blacks were inferior to the white in every aspect. White men are just bounded to have their marital affair with women from their class. According to Larry D. Barnett, "Several states provided a fine of \$ 100 and up to ten years of imprisonment" (2). White men were conscious about this law so they avoided it to be in their lives. If someone got inter-racial marriage, they had to keep it secret in order to escape from the punishment. This also considered inter-racial born children as legitimized. Thus, the law ensured what later on would be known as White Supremacy.

On the other hand, a guilt consciousness is an emotional response that comes as the result of some action that someone labeled or even perceived as being "bad" or "wrong". In other words, it is a remorse caused by feeling responsible for some offense. People those who are aware of doing something wrong can cause guilty feelings. According to Deborah Bach, "Interracial couples are more likely to be dehumanized than same-race couples, the researchers write, and previous studies have shown that people tend to exhibit more antisocial behavior and are more likely to use aggression and even violence toward dehumanized targets"(1). This sense of guilt originates from the process

of self-evaluation and introspection and involves individual perceptions of how others value. Sutpen in this novel is a character who realizes his past and finds guilt consciousness created because of his interracial past relationship with a Negro woman. As individuals rarely engage in social interactions without social identity or association, social emotions arising from such interactions are often tainted by group identity and intergroup appraisals. Even when an individual does not genuinely experience the emotion, they will nevertheless display it to comply with social norms. It includes misuse of basic emotions which guides humans back to the right path when one has done something actually wrong. Guilt comes from personal sense of love and compassion towards others and it's a result of feeling responsible for harming something which human value or worth in. Research identifies mainly two forms of guilt; Deontological and Altruistic guilt. Deontological guilt occurs because of breaking personal moral and values and Altruistic springs from harming someone else. According to Barbara Basile, "Deontological guilt is usually characterized by a sense of responsibility to punishment seeking and sin expiation" (2). In this type of guilt, a convict looks out to punish himself physically in order to maintain moral beliefs of the society. Though existential guilt is another form of guilt, this does not focus much on social beliefs. It happens for not living up life according to expectations and life purpose. Therefore, guilt based on social beliefs is prior to focus rather than individual feelings to relate with Sutpen's experience of past life.

Anti-miscegenation laws were major causes of guilt consciousness in Southern American society. A man who had mistakenly got married to a black woman was destined to suffer in his whole life. In the novel, Sutpen is a southerner who unknowingly gets married to a Negro woman. When he discovers his wife and son to be the blood of black people, he repudiated them and moves to a new place in a search of a new life. Sutpen is a man of courage who was born and raised in a poor family but succeeds to build his own

dynasty and maintaining standards in white society. Though, he did not have anything at the beginning phase of life, he struggle to gain prestige in the society. Therefore, he builds a Sutpen's hundred, purchases land, marries daughter of local merchant and starts plantation. Despite the fact that he succeeded to build his dynasty keeping slaves, his guilt consciousness for being connected to the black people became the reason of his dynasty. Closeness of his son Charles Bon from Negro wife creates guilty feelings on him. More than this, affair of Charles Bon with his white born daughter troubles Sutpen.

Charles Bon represents mulatto in the novel, a child born of mixed White and Black ancestry. According to Jeff Wallenfeldt, "Black-White sexual unions during the slavery era in the North American colonies and later the United States most often were of an oppressive nature between promiscuous white male enslavers and enslaved black women (1)."The children of mixed-races were considered as socially different from their parents, new phenomenon were formed to reflect this perception. In other words, it was the symbolic word to identify specific culture and ethnic heritage of a mixed-race child. Due to the blending of culture or assimilation of Whiteman with a black woman would result racial amalgamation. E.B Reuter says, "To the great majority of men it has always appeared quite obvious that in point of mental capacity there was a distinct differences in the races: cultured man has always regarded primitive man as inferior"(87). It shows the racial segregation and boundary line between white cultured man and mulatto. Bon's activeness in the novel shows his efforts to get right in South American society. The tension between Whiteman Sutpen's rejections and efforts of mulatto bon cause guilt consciousness in Sutpen's family which results both Sutpen and his son Henry to expiate their feelings through sufferings.

On the other hand, prevailing Racism and Slavery played role to promote miscegenation in America. Race refers to the bias of people on the basis of their color of skin. In this context, racism is a belief that groups of humans hold to distinguish them as

inferior or superior to one another. In other words, racism is a human-invented, shorthand term to describe people into various social groups based on different aspects like skin color, physical features and genetic heredity. Racial prejudice was a major factor to determine superiority of white man. Miscegenation laws implemented on that were just in favor of white culture. Moreover, it is socially constructed concept that divides humankind major division in terms of different characteristics. According to Richard J. Perry, "Racism is cultural artifact, the product of a particular cultural context- a part of belief system"(18). Society categorized group of people on the basis of their physical appearance for the purpose of social discrimination. Although the term 'race' used to identify group of people on the basis of kinship before, it was frequently used by all Europeans in the 1500s to discriminate black people on the basis of their physical appearances. It began as European settlers started to migrate over different states of America. After they moved to America, European settlers began to import quantities of captives from relatively circumscribed portion of the west coast of Africa to do the work they were reluctant to do themselves. Though they brought slaves for the purpose of making their daily work easy, it promoted domination of one culture by another by imposing cultural values or by restricting the possible improvisation of cultural behaviors of the later one leaves psychological disintegration. It flamed to create legacy of white supreme society especially in Southern states of America. Racial issues aroused by the whites were assumed to be unquestionable because white race and its cultural products were superior to the black ones. Though south was made a good home by the blacks with their blood, sweat, and tears, traditional history disavows slaves and their descendants. The narratives and historical myths of white were established to legitimize the subordination of preconceived inferior people. To keep slave and owning many acre of land was pride for white man. As Sutpen says in the novel, "I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part Negro" (182). This narration of

Sutpen makes us to believe that he did not know Eulalia as a part of Negro before getting married to her. As he came to know it, he abandoned both Negro son and wife. Sutpen's referring Bon as a Negro man shows Superiority of a white race people.

Furthermore, slavery refers to the condition of having to work very hard without proper remuneration. In other words, Slaves were considered by law as property or chattel. It is the brutal and immoral practice of forcing someone into servitude without paying them. Black people lived most of their lives in a service of white merchants. Both racism and slavery troubled them a lot during this period. Planters and rich merchants used to have slave in their working place. Especially, the growth in cotton industry of southern states increased the demand for slave labor. This expansion of slavery system turned to the evil part of South American Society. According to equal justice initiative's report, "American slavery was often brutal, barbaric, and violent, the myth of black people's racial inferiority developed and persisted as a common justification for the system's continuation"(7). Both physical and psychological punishments were there for these black people. White people considered themselves as superior and intellectual person in the society. All laws made by society also promoted these racial and slavery. In the novel, there are some slaves like Wash Jones who considers Bible and Authority to be equal for white and black people but they could not get equality of rights in white society. In the perspective of god too, slaves were considered as inferior people. Perry says, "Jefferson considered slavery to be a great evil, yet he owned hundred of slaves and considered Africans to be inferior to Europeans"(149). The people those who had thoughts for anti-slavery perception also had slaves at their working place. In their perception too, African and other slaves were less intellectual than inferior to whites in every aspects. Though slavery system was abolished after emerging of Republican Party led by Abraham Lincoln, it had social and cultural impacts up to twentieth century.

Countries like Russia, Nigeria, North Korea, Burundi etc have still exist of modern slavery.

In *Absalom, Absalom*, Faulkner highlights some major repercussions of miscegenation of white males prevailing in a White supremacist society. Though the novel has been narrated by multiple narrators, they have a common event to show overcome of guilt consciousness of white men because of their interracial marriage. Faulkner's major concern here is to show impossibility of race purity; how bigotry related to race-purity leads to doom and damnation. A very first event to be noted here is Sutpen's first marriage with a Negro woman and their black son named Charles Bon. Secondly, Faulkner points out refusal of Sutpen for the marriage between Negro boy and his white born daughter Judith. Moreover, Sutpen's relation with a grand-daughter of a slave man is another impact that author explores as inter-racial marriage in this novel. As Sutpen engages in these incidents, he finds himself closer to the end of his essence. This textual evidence brings us closer to arguments that how a white born man from a middle class family settle in Mississippi, extends his pride and standard, and finally meet his tragic end due to the consequences of miscegenation of his whole life.

As Rosa narrates, "Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and build a plantation", Sutpen is from nowhere because he never reveals his past identity to the people of town (8). Had he revealed it, he would not be successful to build his dynasty. He feared for exposing his past relation with Negro people because state rules were not in favor of man those who had got inter-racial marriage. Rosa further says, "He first rode into town out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion"(9). Looking further to the prestige of white people, Rosa hides Sutpen's past relation in her narration. In other perspectives, Sutpen is man of pride and prejudice who looks upon Negroes as the sign and symbol of the White man's moral sin. For Sutpen, slavery is a black shadow and feels like curse for its sin but the

curse of white race is black man who will be forever god's chosen one because he once cursed him. For this pride of white man, Thomas repudiates his first Negro wife and intended to move ahead to uplift his standard. As Rosa narrates, "he came from by the very fact that apparently he had to refuse to say at all. And the very fact that he had to choose respectability to hide behind proof was enough" (12). He even does not want to reveal his past relation with a Negro woman. Though it makes him succeed to build Sutpen's Hundred and considers it as a new place for his pride and expecting to get happy older life, Bon's appearances in his place on the day of Christmas does not let him to get rid of it. Bon's intimacy with Sutpen's white born son and daughter troubles him a lot. According to IlseDusoirLind,

Charles Etienne Bon, whose spiritual rebellion is signalized in establishment at Sutpen's Hundred of an anthropoid wife and in hi rampages of uninhibited inebriation, reenacts his father's symbolic gestures with greater vehemence, in response to the more sustains psychic and social pressure which he has had to endure.(19)

In other words, establishment of Sutpen's Hundred creates symbolic gestures his pressure on reputation he wants in society. His decision to arrive in this place quitting his wives and Negro son becomes the major cause of his destruction. He did not find himself in a high standard living with low class people and moved for new life. But, his recurring past deeds do not let him live in a peaceful way. Though he faced his tragic end, he lived life in an extraordinary way. It was his fate to marry Negro wife and having a son. As he had a wish to expand his generation giving a birth to a son, he has to face his painful ending due to interbreeding.

Jonathan S. Cullick says, "Parts of Sutpen's failure, then, is his innocence of the nature of history"(57). Sutpen is innocence narrator of his life because he does not know where he is moving towards. His journey of failure occurs due to his injustice over his wife and black son. Multiple narratives in the novel share vivid description to shed light on Sutpen's character. Rosa's narration is more subjective. In contrast, Mr. Compson and

Quentin are objective towards their narration. They see activities of Sutpen with eye of third person and it makes them clear to provide more information about main character with different perspectives. In this way, every character views Sutpen as a person of strong determination, ruthless energy, and as a man who towers over his contemporaries and holds most men in contempt. He represents both the virtues and defects of the entire Southern culture. He seems to have forgotten his original anguish when he was rejected. He is worshipped by people like Wash Jones and his granddaughter, feared by townspeople, and hated by white lady Miss Rosa. He fails to control himself while dealing with his Negro son and wife. It becomes an overpowering obsession which causes him to recognize no deviations from his course and forces if he had done this with a purpose, he would not choose to go through the disaster of his life. When Sutpen repudiated and wished to stay apart from his Negro son and wife after knowing that they are blood of Negro ancestors, he began to work towards responsibility of a white man. As much as Sutpen escapes from Bon and black community, he finds him to be closer. Mr. Compson believes that Sutpen refused Bon due to his birth from Negro blooded woman. As Compson mentions in the novel, "Sutpen's reaction to it, ever looked upon it as a cause for secrecy, certainly not as a valid objection to marriage with a white woman" (50). In order to get equal justice, Bon comes to begin affair with Judith and good friendship with Henry and finally insists Henry to get his murder. Sutpen's overcoming of his guilt consciousness throughout his life is not an individual pain but a collective tragedy of white male groups.

Secondly, the arrival of Charles Bon in Sutpen's house indicates revisiting of injustice that he had in the past. As a mulatto he follows his father Sutpen in search of his identity and equal rights as that of a white man. He falls in love with white lady Judith. Therefore, he gets engaged and has intimacy towards a daughter from white parents. As a mulatto, it was impossible for him in white dominant society. Though Charles was born from a Negro wife, he carried some sort of magnetic attitude which attracted others to get closer to him.

Therefore, both Henry and Judith were closed to him. Even Rosa in chapter five looks to have some attachment with Charles when she comes to know the marriage of Judith and Charles though she did not know him before. As Sutpen realized Bon to be son with his Negro wife, he feared with for revealing his past relation with Negro woman. Therefore, Sutpen gets bothered much with his guilt consciousness and begins to find the way to get rid from the disgrace of his life. When he met Henry second time after the end of the war, Sutpen reveals the secret that Bon is not only a brother of Henry and Judith but also a part of black man. As Sutpen reveals at mid part of the novel that "Charles Bon is a son of his Negro blooded wife Eulalia and going to sleep with his sister", Henry turns into ashes and this sense of guilt does not let Bon to do so. This knowledge makes Henry to revolt against Bon though he did not focus much on the idea of incest. Therefore, he refused his sister Judith and Charles to marry and murdered Charles to erase his connection with Negro identity. As Henry murdered Bon in front of the gate of his Plantation, Thomas entered into the broken house with a broken life. However, incest can be one reason for murder of Charles, dark vision of sense of guilt compels Henry to kill his Negro blooded brother Charles Bon to get rid from their guilt ridden mentality and it causes him to live hidden life and later painful death. This is how both Sutpen and Henry molded by impacts of miscegenation.

A pretty sophisticated character Charles Bon imagines him to be a handsome, dashing hero. He is one who presents a dramatic threat when he appears at Sutpen's door, now a friend to Sutpen's son Henry. For Sutpen, Bon is just a mulatto who wanders to seek for his right. As he got birth from a white man, Bon follows his father to get rights in society. Sutpen does not want to recognize Charles Bon as his son; what's more, he absolutely does not want him marrying Judith. Bon does not know about his Negro blood until he does not get it revealed from his father. He does not have any idea about his identity. It was his fate which leads him to fight for his right. Though he does not directly asks with his father, he engages unknowingly with a daughter of Sutpen. Steve Price says, "While Shreve makes Bon

convinced that his alienation from his father comes from the corrupt blood of his mother, Bon is still unaware that he has Negro blood; it may have something mother had been or done"(329). At this perspective, if we consider Bon to be guilty of the crime he committed, it would not be true. He does not know much about the incidents. For him, it is his mother who might have done something wrong in her past life. From the point of view of Shreve, he gets convinced that the reason behind Bon's separation with his father is due to the corrupt blood flowing in vein of his mother. Price further asserts,

The first direct acknowledgment Bon makes of his Negro blood comes after Henry has been told. Bon's realization is in the form of a deduction: he puts together all of the information he has been guessing at and assuming, and he determines that finally the only thing Sutpen could have said to Henry in the confederate tent was that there was something wrong with Bon greater than that they were brothers. (330)

It shows that Both Bon and Henry were unknown about the incident taking place in their lives. Every character in the novel is unknown about the activities happening to them. They do not have any specific purpose in their life. They come to know after listening to the Thomas that they are not only brothers but also children who have association to the black blood. As Thomas says in the text, "I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part Negro" (182). Thomas came to know Bon's mother as a Negro after the birth of black son. Though Bon was good in looking, the Negro blood flowing in his body represents his identity. Bon comes to know who he is from the conversation of Henry and his father. In this respect, Bon like characters are unknown about purpose and existence of their lives.

Quentin and Shreve propose Bon to be a tragic hero of the Sutpen history. Though Sutpen did not accept marital relation of Bon and Judith, Judith had deep feelings towards him. Therefore, the death of Bon becomes painful for her. According to Shreve,

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 kid.(184)

It shows Judith's attachment towards Bon. She is unable to speak anything for her admired person. In the perspective of Rosa, Bon does not have right to take picture of Judith. Quentin further quotes, "Why the black son of bitch should have taken her picture out and put the octoroon's picture in, so he invented a reason for it"(185). Rosa shows Bon as an evil to Judith showing that how he was not capable to be loved by Judith. It is her consolation to erase feelings from heart of Judith. Not only Sutpen and Henry but also Rosa sees Bon as an evil of their family and society. Though Henry calls Bon as his best friend at the beginning, he shows his rude behavior as he comes to know that Bon is blood of interracial parents. Sutpen enforces Henry to believe Bon as a blood of Negro woman.

Furthermore, novel highlights major glimpses of white men of South American society. Henry responds simply and directly to events. His characters and behaviors show qualities of a man from white society. His actions are easy to predict. Having never encountered so complex a moral problem, he is forced to agonize over his approval. Although he does not want to involve in murder, his realization of point that one drop of black blood overruled all white blood and that the person with one drop of black blood is automatically a Negro. At the beginning, he refuses to accept the fact therefore he repudiates his family and flies with Bon. As it is in the text, "Because Henry loved Bon. There is a conflict of white supremacy and establishing birthright of mulatto boy. He repudiated blood birthright and material security for his sake, for the sake of this man who was at least an intending bigamist even if not an out and out blackguard, and on whose dead body four years later Judith was to find the photograph of the other woman and the child"(49). Though he becomes a good friend of Bon, he failed to control him after listening from his father that his sister is going to marry

a Negro blooded man. As Mr. Compson mentions in the text, "the pure and perfect incest: the brother realizing that the sister's virginity must be destroyed in order to have existed at all, taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become, metamorphose into, the lover, the husband" (52). This shows a particular reason that incest was not the reason of Charles Bon's murder. Henry was positive about incest relation but it was Thomas who showed the path to Henry to commit sin. As Sutpen reveals in the novel,

He must not marry her, Henry. Yes. I said yes at first, but I was not decided then. I didn't let him. But now I have had four years to decide in. I will. I am going to. He must not marry her, Henry. 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 a part Negro. (182)

It shows that Thomas had not revealed this secret at first when he rejects marital affair of Bon and Judith. But, after five years, now he does not want to keep secret. Therefore, he reveals the truth to his son, Henry. He is compelled to do so in order to make his son believe the reason behind his refusal of marriage. Not only this but also he continues the path of their tragic ending together with his son. This creates negative forces in the mind of Henry. The purpose of Sutpen to lead the action ahead gets fulfilled over here. Furthermore, the use of "the black son of a bitch" shows hatred of Thomas towards his black and Negro wife (185). Faulkner writes, "He must have known, as he knew that what his father had told him was true, that he was doomed and destined to kill" (49). Nobody knows what his father told him, he got ready for murder not wanting him engaged with black people. As it can be seen in the novel, "He must not marry her, Henry. His mother told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman" (182). It is clear from here that Sutpen does not want to continue the birth of mulatto children. Bon is not allowed to marry Judith because his ancestors were black people. It is not the reason of incest that prohibits him to do so. Even knowing everything, Henry

does not like to do murder but Bon insists him to do so saying that he is not his brother but the nigger. "No, I'm not. I am the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry" (Bon 184). It proves that the past injustice of his father compels him to involve in murder. Though Sutpen had involved alone in interracial marriage, his whole family soon follows the guilt of his past deeds. As there in the fate of Thomas to suffer, He gets this from his son whom he had expected to bring happiness in his life.

In addition, Sutpen's fall is not just limited to his individual life. Backman says, "All the relationships in the Sutpen family are invested with a peculiar irony, doom, and tragedy, and if a curse had been placed on them like the curse on the house of Oedipus"(602). This comparison of Sutpen family with Oedipus shows that Sutpen family has to fall due to wrong deed of family leader. Judith is also not happy in her life because she has become a victim of her love affair. Losing her boyfriend is painful for her. Similar to Judith, Ellen also faced her tragic end. Though Judith and Ellen are not focal characters in the novel, it can be understood their suffering as a white women. Ellen has to marry with a person who has blot of marrying a Negro woman. If she had known it earlier, she would not engage on it. Likewise, Henry involved in murder due to his father's relation with a man. When he had known anything about relation of his father with Bon, Henry and Bon were good friends. The fault of Sutpen broke their friendship and compelled Henry to take action against Bon. Not only Sutpen's family members but also his slave Wash Jones had to do murder of his owner. He used to worship Sutpen before, but Sutpen's miscegenation and resulting actions compelled him to engage in criminal activities. As Rosa says, "So I can imagine him, the way he did it; the way in which he took the innocent and negative plate of Henry's provincial soul and intellect and exposed it by slow degrees to esoteric milieu, building gradually toward the picture which he desired it to retain, accept"(58). Explanation of Rosa shows innocent characteristics of Henry. As an intellectual man, he would not engage in murder but his father's exploration of Negro relation enforced him to do so.

Besides, Henry spent his hidden life after the murder of Charles Bon. Though he succeeded to avoid his blot of being associated with Negroes, he finds himself pursued by other black ones of his society. Despite the fact that he was living his life happily before knowing his blood relation with black people, he had to suffer his remaining part of life. Clytie, a daughter from Negro women becomes the reason of his death. It looks like taking revenge for death of his brother Charles Bon. After committing sin, Henry goes in a depressive mind and stays away from his family members. Before the event takes place, he was just a simple minded person living his life joyfully. But, difficulties begin to arrive after his deed. Shreve said, "Clytie waited for Henry for almost three months before she went back to get him". It proves that Henry has already written to suffer through his painful journey of life. His painful ending was waiting since a long time in his own house and the lady who brings his death was none other than his own sister. Shreve further says,

And I guess it had been him who had kept that closet under the stairs full of tinder and trash all that time too, like she told him to, maybe he not getting it then either but keeping it full just like she told him, the kerosene and all, for three months now, until the hour when he could begin to how (193).

After the death of Charles Bon, Clytie's purpose of life has been just to have painful ending of Sutpen's family. In spite of the fact that she also had to face death together with Henry, it was her duty to bring equal justice for black people. On the day of tragic ending, Clytie was in window of Sutpen's hundred waiting for the end of Sutpen dynasty. Backman says, "Clytie represents the Negro family servant so involved with her white folks that she could make no life of her own" (603). She feels like nothing without existence of white people because she is inter-connected with white blood since her birth. As both blood kin and fellow human being, Clytie represents her characters of being Negro woman. Her appearance in window shows that she is happily moving to the death after accomplishing her assigned duty now.

Moreover, Sutpen does not just limit him to this murder. As his guilt consciousness does not let him live peacefully, Sutpen slides into alcoholism and has love affair with a fifteen-year-old white girl Milly. In a white supreme society, he fails to see the visibility of injustice to the black people. His fate leads him to engage with black people again and also giving birth to a mulatto. Because of failing to handle his restlessness, Sutpen commits these all actions. Therefore, he wanders for the pleasure and it moves him to the path of his destruction. After sexual intercourse with a daughter of slave man Wash and giving birth to daughter, he commits another injustice with black people which lead him to his death. He finds racial forces of black people troubling him. Although someone might consider Sutpen's fall himself as coincidence of everyday life, his guilt feelings for doing injustice with black people like Eulalia, Bon, and Milly bring his dynasty to the end. The daughter of Thomas from a slave woman, Clytie kills herself and Henry setting fire to the manor house. This leads Sutpen dynasty to a fiery end. In spite of the fact that Thomas wished to have his son for leading ahead the generation and bringing happiness for him, his actions due to guilt feelings of miscegenation brings their generation to the painful endings. Though he was not in the position to make control over his life, Thomas begins a new relation with just fifteen year's old slave girl and get a child. According to Backman,

The breaking point came when Sutpen having attended the mare that had just foaled a colt to his stallion, entered Wash's cabin to see whether he had bred a son by Milly, Wash's granddaughter. Bending over the pallet where she lay with her newborn daughter, he said: "Well, Milly; to bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable". The earth seemed to fall away from beneath Wash's feet. He confronted the planter.(603)

From this, it is clear that a slave man named Wash murders him though he did not wish to kill his owner. The boundary line of racial prejudice insists him to erase this and create equal identity of black people in the society. The injustice happening in front of him was unbearable

as human beings. Though he was bound with certain laws because of being a slave, it was his duty to preserve humanity. To prevent the birth right of a Negro boy, he outrages with the feelings of destruction. Therefore, certain forces against racial injustice led him to do murder and it created the path of salvation.

Milly is a character that represents Negro woman. She is another black woman to carry the blood of a white man. As Sutpen returns from the war, he wanders for the pleasure. For sexual pleasure, he engages with grand-daughter Negro Man. As a result, it gives birth to Mulatto. As Sutpen was fed up with Bon before, he finds another Negro blood to cause disaster in his life. As he tries to prevent from it, he meets his murder from the hand of Wash Jones. Wash becomes here a man to preserve life and identity of Mulatto killing a white man. The contradictions in actions and theme come together. According to Steve,

In order to build a story around the handful of evidence, Shreve and Quentin construct a context in which contradictions coexist as truth. Faulkner has depicted in their story an attempt to account for the characters' coming to know themselves, their world, and the consequences of their actions. (332)

It shows that certain contradictions play significant role in order to bring destruction in Sutpen's life. If Sutpen's had not engaged to Negro girl, he would not give birth to Mulatto. Had not he given birth to mulatto from Negro girl, it would not be the reason of their conflicts. As Sutpen finds the birth of his interracial child, he again tries to escape from it. Therefore, he intends to get rid from that child. His own actions cause Wash to do his murder. The conflict between Sutpen's miscegenation and Wash's fighting for the right of Negro people causes tragic death of Sutpen and his whole dynasty.

Furthermore, Wash Jones is eyewitness of murder of both father and son. When Sutpen returned from the war, Wash helped him manage a country store and also had to care for Sutpen When he was drunk. For him, Sutpen was a man of pride who feeds to the poor black people. Later, he finds Sutpen as a man seeking for his death due to numerous injustice

that he committed to the black woman and child. In other words, he was one who actively observed the tragic end and path of salvation of Sutpen's family. As he assassinated Sutpen, he was one who brought justice for her daughter Milly and her son. Wash Jones is a man to represent his dignity and establishing his right. In order to erase the boundary line of white born children and mulatto, he outrages with confidence and revolts against injustice prevailing in the society. Though some people may consider it as a crime, it is his duty to do so. He is just one elected member from Slave groups to fight against intolerance. As he spends his whole life serving people from white community, he did not do anything wrong. But, when something wrong was going in front of him, he could not bear it. Lind further says, "When Wash is compelled to absorb the finality of Sutpen's dishonorable intentions toward Milly, the bottom drops of his world. His smiting down of Sutpen at this point is an appropriate vengeance against an overstepping-almost beyond credibility-of bounds of generally understood humanity"(18). This is how Wash Jones is fulfilling his duty to stand against injustice of white males. He has the role of giving justice to the victims. When injustice crosses its limit, it looks out to maintain the balance. Whatever one does in his life is not just limited in hand of someone. In order to make action meaningful, one needs to realize mistakes that they have committed and it can be made possible through other's eye because self knowledge is insufficient to decide whether someone is wrong or right. As Backman mentions, "Even Wash Jones' life ended in protest" (604). Wash Jones decided to end his life after the murder of Sutpen not only for himself but also for the society who compelled him to do a protest against the system which refuses their people to get human rights.

Wash worships the Bible and Sutpen believes in a faith of Negro's enslavement and man's equality. For Wash, Sutpen is like a god who feeds them. He cares plants of Sutpen honestly in his owner's absence. He is one of the representing characters among black slave people who is devoted to service of his owner. Therefore, he should worship his god like

man. He believes upon god and bible to be the authority of both black and white people.

According to Backman,

In spite of the blind contradiction in Wash's belief that the Bible could be used as authority for both the Negro's enslavement and man's equality, there is something touching about wash's faith in the planter who had sprung from the same brute origins but who in the span of several decades had become the poor white's apotheosis. (603)

Wash cares crops of Sutpen when he goes on war. He had all responsibilities of handling Sutpen's family. In contrast, certain forces appear there which encourages him to murder of own planter. Rather than food, it comes his responsibility to take care of own family. As he finds misbehaves of own planter with granddaughter, he fails to bear the pain and abuses and acts to end it. In spite of the fact that Wash dismisses Sutpen's life, he succeeds to bring justice back for his forth-coming generations. Sutpen's dynastic failure becomes cruelly definitive and attains horrific dimension when Wash murders Sutpen and then proceeds, in a rampage borne of inconsolable humiliation and despair. Though Rosa and Compson relate incidents of Wash Jones at different time, both of them make us believe commonly accepted existence of Wash. He is one of the pivotal characters to impact upon the plight of Sutpen and outcome of his story.

According to Lind, "In the Sutpen tragedy, one of the most striking recurring patterns expressing the theme is the problem of legal marriage, an obvious crux in a society where continuing class superiority depends on strict differentiation of blood" (901). Even though Thomas and Eulalie got married and give birth to a child who they believe to be white is just an ironical situation. It is impossible to expand generation from the combination of black and white genes. As Thomas reveals later to his son Henry, "It was not his wish to get marriage with her and he was just deceived by other people" (185). We can see imposing of miscegenation on him to marry a Negro woman. Lind says, "When Sutpen, in conformity to the design, dishonors his legal tie to his first fractionally Negro wife, convincing himself that

the claims of morality have been appeased by a financial settlement, his first crime against humanity is committed"(901). It was the major turning point of life which generated many racial injustices. After this event, Bon got an authority to bring justice over the black community. When Wash Jones does the assassination of Thomas, he carries the sin to be completed through the sin. Therefore, he finds himself engaging in a movement and scarifying of his life. In addition, Clytie does not only kill Henry, but also finds her painful death. Laws and moral values are equal for every person and it is their duty to walk through it in order to bring justice for the victims. Therefore, it is just the process of giving and getting justice to the people living around the world.

Though Whiteman like Sutpen considers himself a moral sin of man, slave and black characters like Charles Bon, Wash Jones and Clytie act like curse of white race. As Backman asserts, "Charles Bon incarnates in a sense the tragic history of American Negro, running through his veins was the blood of the slavers and planters" (600). It shows that Charles Bon represents a character who justifies moral sin to the white people. His goal of life is to get rid of the Sutpen and his dynasty because Sutpen considered him to be disgrace of white community. Though he got birth from a white man, he is one who shows the path of morality. His ancestors were black slave and planters. Similarly, Wash Jones and Clytie are also a heritage of black people and planters. They spend most time of their lives in service of white people and become the reason of their death too. Though he considers himself a superior white male and tries to maintain his standard considering Negro as inferior, he finds superior Negroes to teach a great lesson in his life. Wash Jones and Clytie's assassination of Thomas and Henry teaches a moral lesson to White men. As Shrieve speaks to Quentin in the novel,

So it took Charles Bon and his mother to get rid of old Tom, and Charles Bon and octoroon to get rid of Judith, and Charles Bon and Clytie to get rid of Henry; and Charles Bon's mother and Charles Bon's grandmother to get rid of Charles Bon. So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen. (195)

In spite of the fact that their sin acted against human rights, the practice which they followed was justification for the curse of White man and it was a fact. As Sutpen's guilt consciousness acted him upon the action, it took many more lives. Not only Sutpen and Henry but also it took life of two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen. Though Sutpen had to kill Bon to wipe out disgrace of his life, both Charles Bon and Clytie had to sacrifice their lives in the name of preserving single blood line and race purity of white people.

In the novel, Sutpen is both the pride and shame of the South. Backman says, "Faulkner has presented Sutpen as the source of the evil, but he has presented him too as the only heroic figure in the story"(604).Sutpen is a son of poor mountain farmer. He faced lots of struggle in his life and moved to Jefferson. As he arrived in a new place, he purchased land, build his dynasty and married to the daughter of local merchants. Sutpen arrived in this place with many other slaves. He used to produce crops and keep slaves for caring of plants. Similarly, he is a heroic figure because he participated in war. For Rosa, he was a man of dream to marry. Likewise, slaves like Wash Jones used to worship him. In contrast, Sutpen was source of evil for south people. He had marital affairs with Negro woman which was not legally accepted by Miscegenation laws. Interracial marriage was strictly banned in his place. In order to hide this blot, Sutpen enforces Henry to kill Bon and later engages with grand-daughter of own slave. As a result, he gets assassinated from his own slave. Because of him, not only Henry but also black people Bon and Clytie lose their lives. Judith could not succeed to get her love. Ellen faced her painful life due to evil nature of her husband. Sutpen's whole dynasty suffers and gets tragic end due to only evil deed of Sutpen. Shreve says in the novel,

So it took Charles Bon and his mother to get rid of old Tom, and Charles Bon and the Octoroon to get rid of Judith, and Charles Bon and Clytie to get rid of Henry; and Charles Bon's mother and grandmother got rid of Charles Bon. So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen. (195)

It shows that Sutpen was a man of headache for whole south. Not only White men but also niggers lost their lives to get rid of one Sutpen. In this way, he was only the character to have both evil and good virtue of south people. Whole Sutpen story moves around his miscegenation and guilt consciousness about interracial marriage. As he could not come out from his consciousness, he diverts it and wanders for the pleasure. His engaging with grand-daughter of slaves shows his path of devastating end of his life and whole dynasty.

Furthermore, Sutpen never wanted his past and his relationship to blacks exposed for fear of stigma and social ostracization in a predominantly racist society at the beginning. Later, he had to reveal it to Henry in order to prevent interracial marriage of Judith and Bon. This fear of miscegenation explains the major cause of guilt consciousness so as to prevent the marriage between Judith and Charles, but also the unjustified killing of the betrothed. Sutpen abandoned his first wife because of this inter-racial marriage issues and overcame guilt feelings throughout his life. Similarly, he prevented Judith's marriage with Charles Bon to avoid it. Not only this but also he used his white born son Henry to get rid of the blot that he has made in past life. He was compelled to do it to avoid blot going to happen in the town which was against the law of society. He had fear that if he does not wipe out his disgrace, town's people consider as inferior one those who got marriage with Negro people. His second marriage with a daughter of local merchant was just to maintain standard and wipe out past disgrace of his first marriage. In addition, he got engaged with slave's daughter at the middle and repeated the injustice that he did with his first wife which became the major cause of his destruction. In this way, his guilt consciousness led him one after another injustice. For the reason of acting in accord with anti-miscegenation law, characters like Bon, Thomas, and Henry acted and followed the path of their destruction.

This analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!* leads me to conclude that Sutpen's life is much influenced by the effects of miscegenation. Despite the fact that Thomas tried his best to break physically the restrictions that the society has imposed on him, it could only make possible through the overcoming feelings of guilt consciousness. In his past life, he refused to be in the side of black people in the name of beginning a new life. Therefore, he quit his family and place in order to get a

new life and prosperity but his injustice follows him as a Charles Bon. If he had not left his son and wife, he would be now in a different phase of his life. Similarly, If Bon had not followed him, he would not have any kind of guilt consciousness and his life would be in a certain standard manner. But, Bon's proposal for marriage with his white born daughter compelled Sutpen to take action against him. It was against the marriage rules of white community. In order to get rid from black people, Sutpen reveals his past life and association with black people which creates guiltiness in the mind of his white born son Henry too. Therefore, he followed the task shown by his father. No man had control over his life as anti-miscegenation laws were there to guide human life and relation with other people. As a white man, both Sutpen and Henry were compelled to preserve their culture and essence of an identity. Henry's deeds are shown according to the anti-miscegenation laws of white society. It was duty of white man to avoid inter-breeding and born to illegitimate child. More than incest, Henry intended to preserve white norms and values. As he was born in white family, Henry listened to his father and took action to preserve norms and values of white society which paved his path of his tragic ending. Though he did not listen to his father at first and sacrificed his family in a support for Charles Bon, He had to believe it when everything comes out. If he had not listened to his father for the second time, he would not commit sin. As a White male member of society, Henry stood himself against the inter-racial marriage of his sister Judith and Charles. It was not only his father but also his Negro brother Charles forced him to believe on the truth that Bon is son from his father and Negro woman and going to marry his sister. This revealed truth created an inter-racial guilt consciousness upon him so he assassinated Bon to get rid from the blot of their family. This is how Sutpen's dynasty met the tragic end just because of guilt feelings of Sutpen due to his inter-racial marriage and relation with a "Negro" woman. In this way, the novel reflects that White men's concept of single blood line and race purity is impossible to preserve. Though anti-miscegenation laws were there for people, these laws were only in favor of white supreme society. A man committing racial amalgamation was bound to suffer to escape from those laws. In the novel, Sutpen is one of the examples of White man who tried to escape from his racial blot and found his whole dynasty leading to the doom and damnation.

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