

The Nature of Thomas Sutpen's Tragedy in *Absalom, Absalom!*

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I

As is generally known, Faulkner once said that Thomas Sutpen is one of the three tragic figures he created.⁽¹⁾ And, following that statement, most readers of *Absalom, Absalom!* seem to accept Sutpen as tragic in a very easygoing way—that is, without necessarily scrutinizing the significance of the author's words with their own eyes. Indeed, Sutpen had a hard fight against his circumstances with the desire to emancipate himself from their bondage, while neglecting almost all human feelings, not only of others but also of his own. We know that, but it is clear that unless one intends to purposely misunderstand, a struggle like Sutpen's can not be directly joined to the human dignity that Faulkner finds in man's striving "to be better than he thinks he will be,"⁽²⁾ and/or in a man emphasized repeatedly by Faulkner himself late in his life to be one who "encounters his fate through a total fulfillment of his chosen task"⁽³⁾ and, fighting fate, finds his way to genuine manhood. Even when being considered in a most favorable light, it can only be said that he was a demon "who hid horns and tail beneath human raiment" (p. 178)⁽⁴⁾ and who made

(1) Frederick L. Gwynn & Joseph L. Blotner, eds., *Faulkner in the University* (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 119.

(2) Robert A. Jelliffe, ed., *Faulkner at Nagano* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1966), pp. 77-8, 125-6; *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 85, 87.

(3) Irving Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study* (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 241.

(4) Page references are to *Absalom, Absalom!* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965).

his way frantically ignoring the human soul and its needs in others and even enjoining a monstrous stoicism upon himself.

Needless to say, there is nothing the matter with a literary protagonist being a "demon" because, as R. B. Sewall says, "tragic heroes are often criminals in the eyes of society" and "the moral qualities or the sociological aspects of the hero's initial choice are less important than the qualities he shows and the discoveries he makes in the subsequent action."⁽⁵⁾ If we compare, however, the demonic nature of Sutpen's with another demoniac character (for instance, Ahab in *Moby Dick*) we will never be able to find within Sutpen the same spiritual nobility as that contained in Ahab's sense of "the community of all unjust suffering" or something rivaling the dignity with which he took upon himself what he conceived to be the burden of humanity.⁽⁶⁾ Sutpen's death as well as his life is only *personal*; he lived outside the community and died a death that had nothing to do with the suffering of the people living in it.

This observation about Sutpen brings out the following questions: 'what is the reason for Faulkner defining this character as tragic?' and 'is he really worth being called tragic?', which will require further examination of this extraordinary person.

II

Sutpen, as a boy of thirteen or fourteen, was told by a Negro servant in a big house never to come to the front door but to go around to the back. It is with this as the momentum that he discovered his "innocence." At the time, he made up his mind to escape from that innocence—namely, to stop continuing to be a harmless being and to turn himself into a demon. This means that Sutpen then found himself like a blank sheet of paper on which nothing had been written, just an unidentified object in actual life; that he was

(5) Richard B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 62.

(6) See *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

determined to come to be able decisively to assert himself to others, and to make his being itself an undoubted identification. Otherwise—without any apprehension that the matter which took Sutpen by surprise at that time was essentially a question of “What am I?” and that all he did from that time on was to help in the search for his own identity—we would by no means be able to be convinced of why his escaping from innocence meant immediately living in a demoniac way.

Reverting to Sutpen himself, here again we find that in order to make the name of “Sutpen” an identification he, who has been innocent in all respects, takes up a scheme which comes easily into every Southerner’s mind even if it is the hardest to realize in the South: forming a plan to establish a dynasty by himself. However, when he lays out the plan he can think of nothing but imitating the old illustrious families and tracing as correctly as possible the process of their having been built up. Dynasties in the South are of course powerful and wealthy structures of blood relations which were based upon the foundation stones of the Negro people, extracting their humanity from inside. Sutpen’s first step in his work was that he too did not consciously regard the blacks as human beings. Faulkner implies in the following words how Sutpen’s view of the Negro changed after the decision to demoniacally build his dynasty:

... without knowing it then, since he [Sutpen] had not yet discovered innocence: no actual nigger, living creature, living flesh to feel pain and writhe and cry out. (pp. 231-2)

Sutpen’s shallow belief that he can obtain his identification only when he succeeds in establishing the dynasty is never altered throughout his entire life, and it seems to me that the very fact that Sutpen is forged by the author to think and to live in that way is charged with fundamental thing which Faulkner is going to tell in this work. We must consider that literature has been dealing with “What am I?” as one of its most essential problems since the times of Oedipus; and

that the problem, as evident in ancient Greek tragedies, is not only "Who am I?" but intrinsically "What is man?" Moreover, it is an indisputable fact that Faulkner thought that the "Southern dynasty"—or rather the South as a whole—which was founded on the Negro people's sweat and blood would, just on that account, have to be corrupted by the black man's curse.

III

In *Absalom, Absalom!* too, for example, Faulkner has Rosa Coldfield say the following:

... as though there were a fatality and curse on our family and God Himself were seeing to it that it was performed and discharged to the last drop and dreg. Yes, fatality and curse on the South and on our family as though because some ancestor of ours had elected to establish his descent in a land primed for fatality and already cursed with it, even if it had not rather been our family, our father's progenitors, who had incurred the curse long years before and had been coerced by Heaven into establishing itself in the land and the time already cursed. (p. 21)

If that is so, in what form does Faulkner view this "curse" as embodied? The loss of the Southerner's identity with man—perhaps this is what Faulkner perceived above all things. Undoubtedly, that loss came with the Civil War touching it off directly, as many other things. The War, however, gave momentum, and nothing more. Faulkner could have said that the Southern society had been widely covered by that time with the Negro people's curse, which began to spread when the slave ship *Rainbowe* landed, and that the curse had been infiltrating into the South until the inside of the society completely suppurated. James Baldwin has said that "one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own."⁽⁷⁾ It is clear, in-

(7) James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 66.

deed, that if one denies the humanity of another, his own humanity is lost through doing it, and as a result he comes to the point of not knowing what he himself is. This must be, I would guess, the real meaning of Faulkner's "curse."

The above allows us to believe that Faulkner's major problem in the first half of his 30's was that of the loss of the Southerner's identity, especially that of the white people, with man. What are they who are wandering about the land of the South like phantoms?—was it not this matter that obsessed Faulkner?⁽⁸⁾ Did he not think fearfully that he could not make an exception of himself when the Southerner was only an appearance without human substance? We know that some of his main characters at that time committed homicide and some suicide. It seems to me that those two types of killing show the characters' intent to establish their identities, each of them trying to unite himself with someone or something that he chose and believed in.⁽⁹⁾

As one example, we can see Quentin's incest in *The Sound and the Fury* from the viewpoint of his dreaming to establish an identity by uniting himself with his sister because virginal Caddy was, to him, rightly a symbol of the South he imagined as having no kind of stain. Yet even if Caddy could symbolize something, she ultimately was merely a "symbol of social disruption."⁽¹⁰⁾ Quentin's despair was that, having recognized Caddy's reality, he nevertheless could find nothing but that sullied South to identify himself with. Certainly his hopelessness would have been enough to kill him. Here, however, we are

(8) For instance, Irving Howe's view that "human rootlessness in the modern world" is "one of Faulkner's great subjects" will be in alignment with this opinion of mine. See Irving Howe, *William Faulkner*, p. 6. See also *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 242, 245. According to Faulkner, "[to] save the individual from anonymity before it is too late and humanity has vanished from the animal called man." (p. 245).

(9) See Akira Kikuchi, "The Meaning of Love and Death in Faulkner's Literature—I—," in *The Review of Liberal Arts* (Otaru: Otaru University of Commerce, 1973), XLV, 31-48.

(10) Michael Millgate, "The Sound and the Fury," in *Faulkner*, ed., Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 103.

required to think that one must eliminate his actual being if he wants to unite himself with whatever he has chosen, not in a dreamy way but in the strict sense of the word.

From a different standpoint, Quentin's "suicidal" incest is a paradoxical severing of "les vivants édifices des générations charnelles [qui] sont fondés dans l'ordre du temps"⁽¹¹⁾—namely, genealogy. Quentin relates Sutpen's life story to Shreve, but it is with the disgust of having to deal with that story all over again, and he feels that any man who once opened his ears to the tale of such a demoniac life could never find peace again.⁽¹²⁾ It can readily be imagined that Quentin will come to perceive that the Southern pedigrees, dynasties founded on the crushed Negro humanity, have no human substance by any means and consequently are the very root of corruption in the South.

Since Sutpen was born in the South, he must eventually be harassed by the question of his identity, even if he had not been humiliated by that Negro slave in the big house. Yet that which he identifies himself with is a dynasty which is in itself an unidentified thing in the human world.

IV

The Southern mulatto is the sharpest symbol of the loss of identity which is common to both Southern white and black people. It must be conceived, however, that nobody has lived without truly establishing his identity since the times of Oedipus. And it is also true that there are those who must fix their identity at the expense of their own blood. In *Light in August*, Faulkner presents Joe Christmas as a typical example of this. This man, who is neither pure black nor pure white, looks as if "he did not belong to man any longer."⁽¹³⁾ And

(11) André Rousseau, *Littérature du Vintième Siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955), pp. 123-4.

(12) *Absalom, Absalom!*, pp. 277, 373.

(13) Gwynn & Blotner, *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 97, 118.

because of that, his whole life is spent trying to confirm that he is a man or, rather, identifying himself with man. All his deeds were never performed with any intention of seceding from mankind. If we examine them carefully, we find that they served the purpose of taking distance for an approach run, so that he could throw himself more certainly into man.⁽¹⁴⁾

Again, the question that various tragic figures have been most emphatically offering since ancient Greece is not merely "Who am I?" but originally connected with "What is man?": What am I who exists just like this? Christmas can answer this question in a narrow way by almost willingly being killed only to identify himself with immortal "man."

Charles Bon, the child deserted by Sutpen, of course parallels Christmas,⁽¹⁵⁾ but he tries to find his identity in his blood relation with Sutpen, not with "man." In this sense Bon's character is on a smaller scale than that of Christmas'. However, his affliction also is indubitably what Southern mulattos are forced to burden themselves with—the distress of searching for their identity. If we think that both of them wished to identify themselves with their sisters' pure blood, Bon may be to his stepsister Judith what Quentin is to Caddy. Anyway,

(14) In regard to this matter, see Kikuchi, "The Meaning of Love and Death in Faulkner's Literature," pp. 40-1. Joe Christmas in *Light in August* not only shows himself in Mottstown as if he had arranged for his own capture, but also dies as though he had made plans to passively commit suicide. This will imply that he struggled hard to return to the mankind he had once repudiated of his own accord, and that he wished to sublimate his corporeality to identify with that very "man"—or human essence—and assert himself to be a genuine man. See *Light in August* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. 330, 491.

(15) From the standpoint of revolt against society, Charles Bon's son Valery is closer to Christmas than Charles himself. However, even if there is no apparent similarity between the two men's behavior, Charles is connected with Christmas in the respect that his struggle with the fate of being a mulatto was immediately striving to find his identity, no matter what that might contain, just as Christmas was. Cf. Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*," in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed., Frederick J. Hoffman & Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963), pp. 280-1.

what he demands from Sutpen, who deserted him and his mother, is never a legal and external acknowledgement, but Sutpen's paternal affection—admission of the fact that he and Sutpen are warmed by the same blood and "acknowledgement" in that sense alone.

Because he [Bon] knew exactly what he wanted; ... — the living touch of that flesh warmed before he was born by the same blood which it had bequeathed him to warm his own flesh with, to be bequeathed by him in turn to run hot and loud in veins and limbs after that first flesh and then his own were dead. (p. 319)

... even though he [Sutpen] say to me [Bon] 'never look upon my face again; take my love and my acknowledgement in secret, and go' I will do that; ... (sic) (p. 327)

Bon, however, tries to induce his stepbrother Henry to shoot him in the middle of a battle, saying that no one could say but that a Yankee ball might have struck him at the exact second Henry pulled his trigger.⁽¹⁶⁾ What does this mean? Perhaps he knew that if he as a mulatto wished to prove his identity in the South, he must buy it with his own life just as Christmas did. Southern society did not allow that kind of men to have such audacious wishes. This would be one of the reasons for his death, but the more important reason was, I guess, that he felt that he had to be killed by his "brother" Henry, Sutpen's legitimate child, to achieve his wish because only by dying in that way could he unite himself with "Sutpen."

V

As for Sutpen himself, we see that this monster of the will, "a man who is finally optimistic, rationalistic, and afflicted with elephantiasis of the will,"⁽¹⁷⁾ did not have an eye to perceive the reality of society or

(16) *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 344.

(17) Cleanth Brooks, "History and the Sense of the Tragic: *Absalom, Absalom!*," in *Faulkner*, ed., Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966), p. 201.

the clans. ... Or should we say that despite his sharp eyes, Sutpen had only a sort of blindness, the inability to see clearly the substance of things, which we could call "abysmal and purblind innocence" (p. 265) in Faulkner's terms? Especially in his manhood, he seems to have had no capacity to foresee even his own future. For instance, he never expected that the Haitian woman he had deserted would have wanted to track him down and actually could have been tracking for thirty years. I would like to direct my attention here to the opinion that the power to foresee his course in life is an indispensable element making a person a tragic figure.⁽¹⁸⁾ Indeed, the ancient Greeks precisely bestowed that power on the tragic spirit. The reason is that the spirit has clairvoyance to an obstacle in its path—an obstacle which will inevitably come into collision with the spirit and bring it to destruction—and yet majestically walks on. From this point of view, I must judge that Faulkner did not create Sutpen, at least in his manhood, to be a categorical tragic personage. The author has Mr. Compson talk about Sutpen's lack of foresight in this way:

... he [Sutpen] was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony ... was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one. (pp. 72-3)

He trusts the dynasty alone and has not the slightest doubt about it, so his manner wells up with self-confidence when he could believe that he had succeeded in getting hold of riches and power. Sutpen now

(18) See George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 366. Irving Howe also admits, while emphasizing Sutpen's strength of will (saying that his single-mindedness is less fanaticism than a grandiose solipsism), that Sutpen is not risen to the greatness of the tragic hero and that the reason for this is his failure in self-recognition, a variant of foresight. See Howe, *William Faulkner*, pp. 222-3.

comes to believe that he can answer to "What am I?," and he utterly disregards how his actions might appear to the townspeople, haughtily standing against them with an expression almost like a smile.⁽¹⁹⁾

When Bon makes his appearance, Sutpen behaves in an unusual way. To begin with, he tries to neglect Bon, and this is done in such a way that at no time during four years did he give Bon a single word, even the flat refusal "Never see me nor Judith" that Bon had expected in order to close up the relationship between him and Sutpen. This evidently means that Sutpen wished to rid his own consciousness of Bon not only as his child but also as a human being. Why? To him the dynasty had to be founded, of course, on white blood. If white blood mixed with black blood, then the dynasty could not be a real dynasty; his identity would be insecure again because it was identified with mixed descent. That would be one of the reasons, but I cannot help thinking that there was another reason more serious to him when it is considered that Sutpen's greatest concern was not his children but the family name "Sutpen." For instance, we can immediately recall what Sutpen might have thought when his legitimate son Henry disappeared after having shot Bon to death. Quentin conjectures that Sutpen must have thought thus: a son who would change his name in another place and the son's child whose mother would be a strange woman both have nothing to do with either the Sutpens' blood or the Sutpen name.⁽²⁰⁾ Although this is not what Sutpen himself said aloud, we find no difficulty in believing it to be Sutpen's real feeling from the context of the story. We are compelled to see again and again through Sutpen's actions that he adhered to a son who called or could call himself Sutpen. And taking that into account, Sutpen's rejection of the mixing of black blood into his dynasty cannot be an adequate reason for his utter disregard of Bon; because, even if Bon had married Judith, Sutpen could have thought that the new blood brought forth by that couple logically had nothing to do with

(19) *Absalom, Absalom!*, pp. 57, 72.

(20) *Ibid.*, p. 182.

the blood and the name of "Sutpen," the same way as in Henry's case.

Perhaps to Sutpen the matter of blood had something to do with his own self rather than with his genetic traits. He seems to have instinctively felt that to have called Bon into being—or rather, correctly, to acknowledge Bon as his child—namely to acknowledge Bon as a man—meant that his blood was not pure white any more but was mixed with black. (Will it be necessary to confirm here that Clytie has not been a human being to Sutpen since her seeing the light?) Judith tells Quentin's grandmother some words to the effect that one is born and gets mixed up with a lot of other people and hitched to all the other arms and legs with the same strings.⁽²¹⁾ And it seems too that in this novel some characters share Judith's notion of human relationships. Quentin, for instance, thinks thus:

Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes, we are both Father. (pp. 261-2)

I think Sutpen also sensed—not theoretically but, so to speak, instinctively—that a father's and his child's blood flow into each other through a narrow umbilical cord. Because of that, Sutpen persisted in *neglecting* Bon to persuade his own conscious self to believe that Bon did not exist in this world. Sutpen does not try to refuse, because refusal is premised on "being."

(21) *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 127.

VI

Needless to say, Sutpen's endeavor goes by the board. If a father mixes up with his son and if "both are Father" as Quentin says, Sutpen's blood cannot prevent itself from mixing with Bon's. And if one shares common blood with another, at least in my opinion, he must then share fate with that person as well. Thus it is that Sutpen, through knowing Bon to be his son, is doomed to burden himself with Bon's fate, the fate of a mulatto which is to search continuously after identity against his will. In fact, while he tries to thoroughly neglect Bon, he cannot help feeling his house, position, posterity and all come down like it was built of smoke, soundlessly without even leaving any debris⁽²²⁾—that is, he cannot help feeling his own identity, which he believed already established, dissolve.

Thus it is from his meeting with Bon that Sutpen begins to take on a tragic appearance. In order to investigate the Bon he saw only once—in order to examine his identity, which has become insecure—this Sutpen, a man who may have shot rather than have investigated someone about whom he had doubts, makes a six hundred-mile journey⁽²³⁾ and scents something necessary with the stubbornness and accuracy of a dog. He does not then think, however, that to examine his identity is to reinforce it. On the contrary, he seems to have perceived that such an examination would bring ruin upon himself, or seems to have been cognizant that he who acted and did such a thing was, so to speak:

... [a man] who knew but still did not believe, who was going deliberately to look upon and prove to himself that which ... would be like death for him to learn. (p. 335)⁽²⁴⁾

(22) *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 267.

(23) *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100, 102.

(24) Although these words are Quentin and Shreve speaking of Henry, it is obvious that they can be applied to Sutpen and furthermore to Charles Bon. It may even be unnecessary to bring out here again Quentin's thought that a father's and his child's blood flow into each other through an umbilical cord.

In Sutpen—in this attitude of his which seems to want to wrench from fate its full truth, if I dare to say—we may be able to see the image of Oedipus, that tragic figure of *hubris* who willingly threw himself into darkness to track down his identity, deaf to all advice.

The South's defeat in the Civil War did, as a natural result, decide the defeat of Sutpen, whose prosperity also had been standing on the slaves. He knows that his expedient identity has completely collapsed. In the postwar Sutpen there no longer remains any vestige of the former haughtiness with which he used to confront others.

The flesh came upon him suddenly, as though what the negroes and Wash Jones, too, called the fine figure of a man had reached and held its peak after the foundation had given away and something between the shape of him that people knew and the uncompromising skeleton of what he actually was had gone fluid and, earthbound, had been snubbed up and restrained, balloonlike, unstable and lifeless, by the envelope which it had betrayed. (p. 81)

Living with Judith, Rosa and Clytie while using the room which the three women kept for him and eating the food which they grew and cooked, he comes to a strange state where only the shell of him is present. Sutpen, who has lost substance or missed out on a means of answering to "What am I who exists here?" is, even in Rosa's eyes, only "something" before being a man.⁽²⁵⁾

Now that he has been reduced to really troubling over the matter of his identity as a result of encountering Bon and burdening himself with his son's fate, he seems to come to possess a more tragic air by escaping from the purblindness in his manhood and obtaining even a sort of foresight for his own future. Shreve says:

[Sutpen] realized at last that his dream of restoring his Sutpen's Hundred was ... vain (p. 180)

(25) *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 160.

And even Rosa looks at Sutpen in the following manner :

... he faced from the brink of disaster, invincible and unafraid, what he must have known would be the final defeat ... (p. 163)

VII

Of course he is not a man to be daunted by a single failure, and goes farther to pursue his identity once again.

Even at this time, nevertheless, Sutpen does nothing but make his way to the cursed dynasty as before. Be Sutpen's anguish ever so deep in his later years, it does not work so as to convert the inner spirit of the man. He, all the same, wears "abysmal and purblind innocence" and continues to be "a man who is afflicted with elephantiasis of the will." As a matter of fact, Sutpen persists in grasping for the truth in the same way as Oedipus did. However, in contrast with this classical personage who gouged out his own eyes when the truth came clear, Sutpen ends up in being killed with a rusty scythe.

R. B. Sewall interprets the significance of Oedipus' act of gouging out his eyes in the following words on the whole: Oedipus' act stands in the play as the assertion of his ability to act independent of any god, oracle, or prophecy, and although he is still Oedipus he has enlarged his domain as a human being by obtaining a certain humility and love at his end.⁽²⁶⁾ If we apply this interpretation to Sutpen, what assertion of the free will in the true sense of the word, what enlargement of self can we see in Sutpen's last—the last of this old man who impregnated a fifteen-year-old girl and was killed *unexpectedly* by her grandfather with a rusty scythe? There is nothing but wretchedness in Sutpen's end, and we cannot refrain from saying that he is a far cry from the image of personages in classical tragedies.

However, just because of wretchedness itself he can exist as a new tragic figure molded by Faulkner. Sutpen, who shares fate with Bon

(26) Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy*, pp. 41-2.

the mulatto, cannot be or rather must not be placed under the category of classical tragic figures who were almost literally heroes. Obviously he is required to be solely wretched. In fact, it is possible to say that he enlarges Bon's misery through ultimately becoming more miserable than Bon. Following Bon's fate which he had to take upon himself, he also loses his life pursuing his identity. But Sutpen's death brings him nothing, whereas Bon could at any rate establish his identity by passing away. Sutpen's soul must perpetually wander from place to place to find his identity.

Nevertheless, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, that wandering is the reason why Sutpen's life is tragic. For when he strives for his identity without really understanding why he had to lose it and fails to find it after all, he becomes a tragic witness to one aspect of the corrupted South—a man who walked into the tragic condition of his times of his own accord and acted out the extent of the confusion of his days.

In tracing Sutpen's demoniac life we are obliged, in point of fact, to think about human nature and a human society not only through the suffering but also through the evil of a man placed in a boundary-situation. Sutpen is heterogeneous with the personages in classical tragedies indeed, but in the said meaning it is also unquestionable that he is a new tragic figure of the days.

Sutpen is no doubt presented as the embodiment of the South. All that the author intended to say in this work, (by spending about 190,000 words) might have been that Sutpen (i. e. the South) would by no means be able to find his identity unless he apprehended the weight of black blood which inhered in him, or at least had fostered and given shape to him.