



# Designs in Faulkner's Old South: Inheritance of Wealth through Patrilineal Society



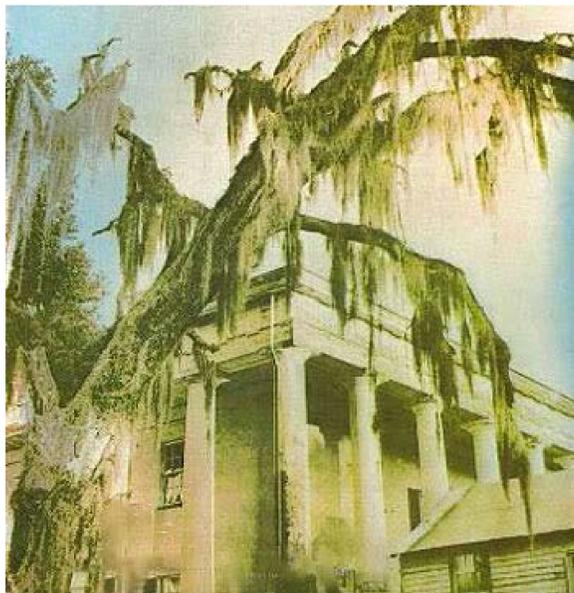
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- Man defines himself through his striving. Man cannot simply vegetate-cannot simply be. He must become, and he will become what he ought to be largely through his own effort and through the inheritance he gains from those who came before him. -Brooks

## What is Patrilineal Society?

- Husband, the leader of the household, passes down
  - his home,
  - his land,
  - his slaves, and
  - his own power
 to his sons that showcases the worth, prosperity, and respectability of the family.
- The inability to inherit family property for
  - blacks,
  - females, and
  - those who “repudiate their blood birthright and material security” brings the fall of the Sutpen legacy (Faulkner 71).



The picture used on the first edition dust jacket published in 1936 by Random House.

## Abstract

During Faulkner's time within the Southern region of the United States, inheritance was viewed as a transfer of wealth through patrilineal society as seen in *Absalom, Absalom!*. This novel appears to follow the history of the Old South, yet Faulkner puts a direct emphasis on the inheritance of wealth, or lack thereof, that impacts Sutpen's grand design and the subsequent fall of his plantation and family name. It is the power of the husband, the leader of the household, to pass on his home, his land, his slaves, and his own power to his sons that showcases the worth, prosperity, and respectability of the family. This ideology in reference to patrilineal society is neither fair nor accurate, however, as the flawed ideology points out the unfairness of society itself. Male heirs inheriting wealth and the Sutpen legacy both deteriorate as blacks, females, and those who turn from their families bring the fall of the Sutpen name. Faulkner showcases a definitive failure in the Old South's social construction in which death of patrilineal inheritance brings a fall to the families, legacies, and designs that permeated the South.

## Thesis:

Faulkner showcases a definitive failure in the Old South's social construction in which death of patrilineal inheritance brings a fall to the families, legacies, and designs that permeated the South.

- This idea of inheritance as a transfer of wealth through patrilineal society is seen in *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner.

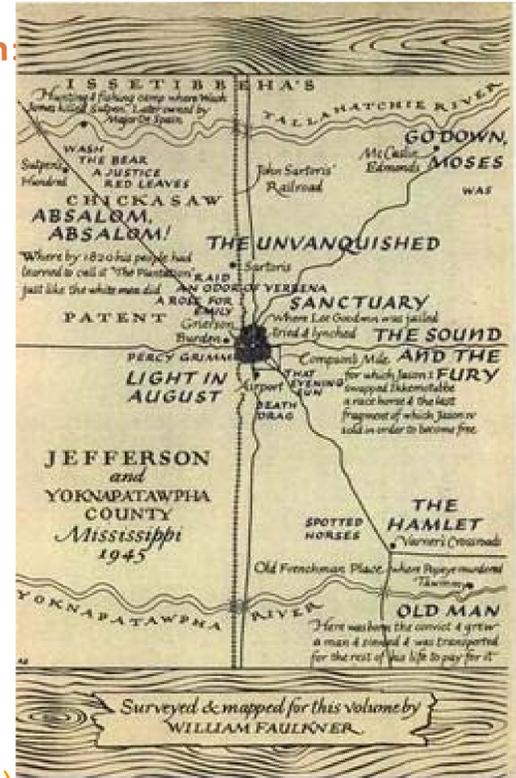
*“He must have felt and heard the design – house, position, posterity and all – come down like it had been built out of smoke, making no sound, creating no rush of displaced air and not even leaving any debris.”*

With the fall of the Sutpen family comes the failure in the Old South's social construction in which death of patrilineal inheritance brings a fall to the families, legacies, and designs that permeated the South.

## Sutpen's Design:

- money,
- a house,
- a plantation,
- slaves,
- a family

Yoknapatawpha county in Mississippi-The setting and location of Sutpen's plantation and design (Faulkner published numerous novels within this setting.)



## The Importance of House and Land within Thomas Sutpen's Design.

- Sutpen's design showcases the importance of land ownership in the South, for in order to escape the label of “white trash,” man must own land.
- The mansion symbolizes
  - Power
  - respectability
  - self-made man
  - symbol of patriarchy

•Sutpen's outlining of his design painted the image of death and destruction before resolution and legacy.

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