Filozofická Fakulta Univerzity Karlovy

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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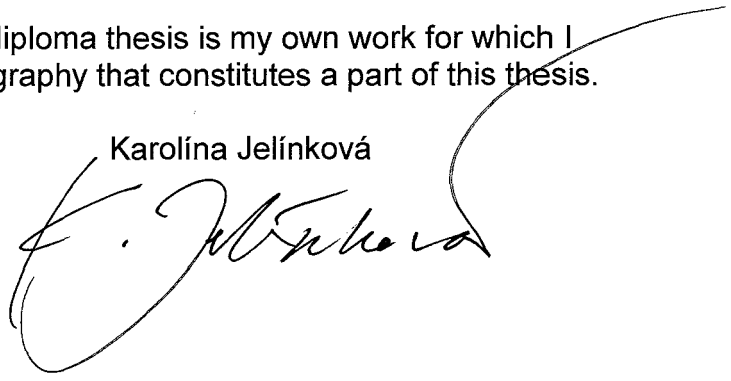
Praha 2006

William Faulkner's *Light in August*: Constructing Race in the Community

Declaration: I declare that the following diploma thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources listed in the bibliography that constitutes a part of this thesis.

Prague, 31 July, 2006

Karolína Jelínková



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Acknowledgments

The compilation of this thesis would not have been possible without the significant contribution of many people. I would especially like to thank Hana Ulmanová for introducing me to the intriguing world of William Faulkner and her kind help and support throughout my work on this project. This work would also have been impossible without the many consultations and help of Dr. Gary Richards during my stay at the University of New Orleans. Furthermore, I am most grateful to Prof. Dr. Heinz Ickstadt and Dr. Susanne Rohr of the John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien, Freie Universität Berlin for their kind support of this project – the sources acquired during my research stay at the JFK-Institut proved to be priceless and greatly facilitated my work. It has also been a great pleasure and help to be able to engage in conversations about this project with Dr. Erik Roraback.

Special credit is reserved for Dawn McKenna and Lawrence Wells for proofreading and valuable suggestions.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their emotional support throughout. Among the kindness of all these dear ones, the love of Štěpán Kroupa, the Faulknerian zeal of Ivan Jelínek and the care of Erna Jelínková stand out.

Preface – A Biographical Note

When William Faulkner was born on September 25, 1897, he entered the times of the high tide of racial extremism that marked the post-Reconstruction era and the beginning of the 20th century. The small domestic world of the Falkner family William lived in as a small boy also afforded him contact with racial differences, most memorably through the servant of the Falkner family - Caroline Barr. This was a harmonious contact. The Falkner boys called Caroline "Mammy" Callie; "she cooked, she cleaned, and she cared for them but most of all the boys liked her stories – of animals in the woods, ghosts, and the 'Old Days' of slavery. The boys loved her dearly" (Williamson, William Faulkner and Southern History 153).

However, William was soon confronted with the other side of the racially divided world. This must have happened most powerfully in the year 1908, when Oxford, Mississippi witnessed the lynching of Nelse Patton, "a black convict, but also [...] a 'trusty'" (Williamson, William Faulkner and Southern History 157) who was allowed to run errands all over the town. He killed Mattie McMillan, a white woman, to whom he delivered a message, but refused to leave her house. She attempted to draw a pistol, but he stopped her and "drew a razor blade across [her] throat [...], almost severing her head from her body" (Williamson, William Faulkner and Southern History 158). Her daughter ran up to help Mattie and Patton allegedly attempted to assault her as well. She escaped and alarmed the rest of the town. This started a frenzy in which about 2,000 people partook, arriving also from the surrounding countryside. Finally the crowd managed to drag Patton from the jail and "strung him up naked on a telephone pole, and riddled his body with bullets" (Williamson, William Faulkner and Southern History 159). Clearly, it is impossible to imagine that such an

event would have escaped Faulkner's notice, even though he was a ten year old boy at that time (Williamson, William Faulkner and Southern History 141-159).

It seems all the more impossible to think that Faulkner missed this event after reading *Light in August*, the major focus of this thesis. It is a memorable and complex picture of the racially divided world of the US South, a piece that will remain worth reading and analyzing as long as racial denominations will remain part of our lives and as long as we will continue to accept them unquestioningly.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim, Method and Structure

1.1.1 Aim

In the preface to his influential study of Faulkner's work, *Faulkner: The House Divided,* Eric J. Sundquist claims that "there is surprisingly little in the critical literature about [Faulkner] that has suggested the complexity, in both emotional and social terms, of his imaginative commitment or examined it within the relevant historical contexts" (ix). In this thesis we want to take up the challenge posed by this claim and attempt to show the complexity of Faulkner's work and view it in a sociological and cultural context. Since this undertaking would be almost impossible for one person to accomplish, we will limit ourselves to only one of Faulkner's works – *Light in August* – and to only one out of the variety of Faulkner's themes as embodied by the novel: race. We would therefore like to view the concepts of race that appear in *Light in August* in the context of thinking about race in sociology on a theoretical level. This attempt will be predominantly concerned with race as a constructed notion, not as something naturally given. Furthermore, we would like to view Faulkner's conceptions of race in the context of the development of the notion from a cultural point of view. We would therefore like to trace out the functioning of race in the communities of Jefferson and Mottstown and the ideas that race represent in these communities. In this analysis we would like to utilize the findings of the chapters with a theoretical and cultural focus. Along with considering the communal functioning and concepts of race we would like to consider the meanings and concepts of race that shape the lives of two central characters: Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden.

1.1.2 Method

The above description of the aim of this thesis shows that the method of this research will be that of a close reading of the text with the aid of concepts that appear in sociology. A great emphasis will be placed on the interdisciplinary nature of this undertaking, keeping in mind that the primary goal of interpreting specific aspects of Faulkner's text is distinctly literary. This approach will ultimately help us shed more light on the way Faulkner transforms the reality he experienced into art.

1.1.3 Structure

Given the aim and method we have outlined above we envisage the following structuring of our argumentation:

In the second chapter we would like to outline the definitions of the sociological terms "constructing", "race" and "community" and show the basic qualities of the phenomena they describe. We want to undertake this in order to provide a secure ground for our literary analysis, since these terms will be used throughout and we want to avoid misunderstanding as to their meaning. Together with these three basic terms we also find it useful to outline a definition of the term "identity", since race comprises a part of personal identity and a part of our argumentation will be concerned with the troubled personal concept of race of Joe Christmas.

In the third chapter we would like to provide a historical context for our investigation of race. Our focus will not be predominantly on the incidents in the history of race relations in the United States, but on the historical development of the notion of race. Since this concept grew out of European roots, we will try to trace them and see how the specific experience of colonial life, the institution of slavery

and the turmoil of the nineteenth century in the United States gave a distinct shape to the concept of race in the form of stereotypical views of the black people.

Our fourth chapter will comprise the central focus of this thesis in that it will provide the substantial part of the literary analysis. This chapter will primarily deal with the conceptions of race present in the community and how they reinforce the position of its members as individual characters. We will therefore also analyze the possible positions the community members may occupy. Gail Hightower will serve as an example of the dynamic possibility to change status in the society. Significant attention will also be given to language as a means through which the notions of race are maintained and circulated and therefore truly constructed. All these strands will combine in order to provide a discussion of the way the community deals with a character that is deeply ambiguous: Joe Christmas. In his case we will follow the dynamic of his status in the community, the way his racial identity is constructed in the community and the role that language plays in this process.

The fifth chapter will comprise a counterpoint to the fourth chapter in that we will move to the private sphere of two characters: Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden. Here our major focus will be the way they personally identify and live out their racial identity. Furthermore, we will try to trace out their thoughts and patterns of behavior for meanings they associate with race.

1.2 Evaluation of Secondary Sources

Out of the theoretical sources concerned with race and constructivism, we especially found John Searle's study *The Construction of Social Reality* to be very informative with respect to the general idea of constructivism and the role of language in constructing various aspects of social reality such as the case of money or marriages, for example. Berger and Luckmann's treatise was influential in regards to socialization and the role it plays in the formation of identity. A general perspective on race as a phenomenon of social reality was very persuasively put in Audrey Smedley's book *Race in North America. Origin and Evolution of a Worldview.* Nicky Hayes' book *Základy sociální psychologie* was highly informative with respect to stereotypes and their basic characteristics.

With respect to the cultural development of the idea of race, the most informative study was Audrey Smedley's book *Race in North America. Origin and Evolution of a Worldview.* Besides proving very helpful in basic theoretical considerations of the concept of race, it was invaluable for tracing out the development of the notion race and the way European notions combined with the specifics of life on the American continent in order to give rise to a specific way of viewing black people especially. These notions solidified into stereotypical categories, such as Sambo or the tragic mulatto and these are well described by Tomáš Pospíšil in the introductory part of his book *Sambo tu již nebydlí? Obraz Afroameričanů v americkém filmu 20. století.* With respect to the life of mulattoes in the United States and the emergence of the tragic mulatto stereotype, the introduction to Judith Berzon's study *Neither White nor Black. The Mulatto Characters in American Fiction* proved to be a valuable expansion on the information provided by Pospíšil. The historical development of these stereotypical notions is also examined by Joel Williamson in his book *The Crucible of Race. Black-White*

Relations in the American South since Emancipation and it is particularly his consideration of the development of the image of the submissive Sambo into the "negro beast rapist" in the historical context of the turn of the 19th century politics and social climate that made this book a valuable source of information. Besides his major focus on the turn of the 19th century, Williamson also provides a valuable perspective on the aftermath of this era, especially the 1920s that saw a resurgence of the Sambo stereotype. This source of information allows us to trace the stereotypical images of black people up to the times when Faulkner lived and created his works.

Out of the secondary sources concerned with Faulkner's *Light in August* and the theme of race, it was above all Thadious Davis' study, *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context* that provided the basic inspiration about the existence of racial stereotypes in Faulkner's work and the way Faulkner uncovers them as absractions especially in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*[1] This book has also proved indispensable for the discussions of Joe, Joanna and the "negro beast rapist" stereotype in the community. Another initial impulse came from Theresa Towner's article "Unsurprised Flesh: Color, Race and Identity in Faulkner's Fiction": Towner focuses here on the constructed nature of race. Even though Towner only touches on the problems of race in the case of Joe Christmas, she also suggests the way the concept of race came about through the push and pull of the cultural forces throughout the centuries. In this sense Towner inspired the search for placing Faulkner's work into the sociological and cultural context that is the aim of this thesis.

[1] In this section we do not pretend to give a full account of the literary criticism of Faulkner's work. For succinct account of criticism concerning *Light in August* cf. Alwyn Berland 15-20 and Michael Millgate 17-22.

Moreover, Towner also looks at the role of language in the process of constructing racial categories and thus inspired a deeper interest in this theme. Equally influential was an article by Philip Weinstein, "Marginalia: Faulkner's Black Lives", that deals with the relation between the center and the margin in terms of race and thus it suggested the importance of analyzing the racial conceptions of individual characters as well as those of the community and focusing on the tension these conceptions create.

Besides these sources of information it was also the study of Cleanth Brooks, "The Community and the Pariah", that is a part of his canonical book of Faulkner criticism *William Faulkner. The Yoknapatawpha County,* that was enlightening on the theme of the relationship between the community and the individual characters. This work not only suggested the strength of the community but also showed the community in a rather sentimental light as a "recognizable flock with its shepherds, its watchdogs, sometimes fierce and cruel, and its bellwethers" (Brooks 54). While we agree with the first proposition, we found the latter hard to defend and it was an article by Andre Bleikasten, "*Light in August*: The Closed Society and Its Subjects", that amends Brooks' argumentation in that it shows the pervasive presence of racist, sexist and puritanical ideas that require absolute conformity and in this sense the community becomes a locus of troubling forces.

With respect to the racial identity of Joe Christmas we found Mary Joanne Dondlinger's article, "Getting around the Body: The Matter of Race and Gender in Faulkner's *Light in August*", highly thought-provoking because of its radical thesis that Joe self-identifies as black, but relates to the concept in a negative way. This argumentation is based on Judith Butler's conception of identity as a citation of cultural authorities. Yet this thesis is too radical and so we primarily focused on less

radical theses such as that of Thadious Davis, who claims that Joe is both white and black and that this identity is a future-oriented impulse.

For the discussion of Joanna two studies proved to be indispensable: Judith Bryant Wittenberg's article, "The Women in *Light in August*", offers a basic discussion of all the female characters in *Light in August* and therefore also of Joanna. Bryant Wittenberg sees her as a strong and opinionated woman and this view is consistent with ours. The second study is Dianne Robert's *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood* that places Joanna in the context of opinions about spinsters in the South and interprets her as a woman capable of radical subversion in that she materializes the general Southern fear of the union of the black male and white female and of the associated fear of miscegenation.

2. Constructing, Race, Community and Identity: a Theoretical Approach

Before we can come to the central task of this thesis we would like to devote this chapter to some basic theoretical considerations that will supply a framework of reference and sociological background for our close reading and analysis of William Faulkner's *Light in August*. These basic considerations will also help us show William Faulkner's superb insight into the problematic field of race and its functioning in a community as it manifests itself in *Light in August.* On a more general level these considerations will also help us show the intricate links between sociology and literature.

Given the fact that our task is above all literary, our investigation of the sociological problems of constructing, race, identity and community makes no pretense to be a full and in-depth account. Therefore we find it useful to restrict ourselves to three major sources: John R. Searle's *Constructing Social Reality*, Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* and Audrey Smedley's book *Race in North America. Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*. The former two works were very informative in providing a general theoretical perspective on constructing and the role of language in it. The work of Berger and Luckmann also provided valuable insights on socialization and the emergence of identity. The latter work has been greatly enlightening with respect to certain theoretical notions specifically underlying the concept of race, especially with respect to its cultural development.

2.1 Constructing, Race and Community - Definitions and Basic Concepts

2.1.1 Constructing and Sociocultural Constructs

In order to clarify what we mean by constructing, we shall make use of a contrast. In sociology there are two possible ways of viewing the nature of the social world: it is possible to view it in an essentialist manner, that is, as something "naturally given or taken for granted" (Marshall 609), or in a constructionist way that stresses the "created nature of social life" (Marshall 609). Thus when we will use the term 'constructing' in the argumentations throughout our thesis we will be referring to phenomena that exist in society and culture as created by human beings and argue thus against the essentialist stance. Viewing sociocultural phenomena such as race or gender as constructs, i.e. phenomena that emerge through the process of constructing, has a distinct advantage over taking the essentialist approach, because it allows for questioning their social and historical roots and thus is a primary vantage for our quest for the nature of race as a phenomenon of social reality[2].

[2] The term „social reality" could cause some difficulties in the subsequent discussions and therefore we will also specify it more closely. The most essential feature of social reality is its created nature. Social reality is created by human beings and springs from their inborn tendency to socialize. Thus all the phenomena subsumed under the term social reality cannot exist independently of human beings, outside of their everyday activities, in which this reality in turn manifests itself at every moment in a very complex manner. This is very succinctly summarized in one of the classic maxims of sociology: "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product." (Berger and Luckmann 79). In this sense it is also the opposite of the natural world or natural reality (Kel 910) that is experienced in everyday life. The contrast natural versus social reality is constituted not only by the opposition "given" and "constructed"; it is also made up by the contrast "visible" and "invisible", although this latter opposition is to a large degree the consequence of the former (Searle 4). As a part of these considerations we take for granted the existence of the real world, contrary to some philosophical theories. This view is justified by the fact that, as Berger and Luckmann point out, „this wide-awake state of existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life is taken by me to be normal and self-evident, that is, it constitutes my natural attitude" (35).

We will now turn to a discussion of some characteristics of sociocultural constructs. First of all, they are dependent on language for their existence. Before we investigate this statement further, we have to remind ourselves of the definition of language. For this purpose we will take up the Structuralist definition of language of Ferdinand de Saussure, who stipulated that language is a system of signs that carry meaning. As a system of signs, language provides us with labels for things, ideas, actions, characteristics, etc. and constitutes also the constant possibility to name all new phenomena as they come into existence.

Human beings use this system to develop ideas of great complexity and even abstract ideas without a palpable grounding in reality and communicate them to one another within groups and societies unless they are prevented from doing so by some specific conditions. Thus language also presents the constant possibility of articulating new ideas and restating what has already been iterated. This basic presumption is valid independently of the cultural background (Marshall 359) and is dependent on the general and innate human ability to learn languages.

The implications of these statements for sociocultural phenomena are very significant. Since they are a part of social reality and we have established social reality as invisible in its structure, language is a means that gives them substance. Secondly, "being inherently social, [these phenomena] must be communicable" (Searle 77), if they are to signify. For this purpose they require a means of communication that is common to all members of the society, i.e. language. Third, sociocultural constructs are complex phenomena in the variety of meanings that they engender. But in order to be as complex as they are, they also require a complex system of representation for their existence, because they are complex "only to the extent that [they are] represented" (Searle 77).

Furthermore, we have already mentioned the fact that language presents the constant possibility for iterating and reiterating ideas. In this form it also presents the possibility of constructing notions out of many meanings over time, and the sociocultural constructs such as race and gender are in this sense dependent on language for their cultural development. This possibility to state and restate ideas is infinite and thus the constructibility of sociocultural phenomena is also infinite.

Another important characteristic of sociocultural constructs is that in a specific human group or society there has to exist a consensus about their existence, or as Searle puts it, such constructs like race and gender are "things that exist only because we believe them to exist" (1). This consent is extremely important for the existence of these constructs, because it is partly constitutive of them. This is all, yet again, an implication of the fact that sociocultural constructs are a part of social reality. Thus they are also dependent on human beings and result directly from the negotiating of meaning via language in society.

Another characteristic of sociocultural phenomena is their existence in time. Therefore we can perceive from a synchronic point of view at any given moment throughout history a distinct set of meanings and attitudes that make up these sociocultural phenomena. If we then look at these ideas and attitudes from a diachronic point of view (Smedley 16), we can observe a development. The ideas that make up the constructed notion may become more complex, or some meanings may be added, while at the same time the complexity of other components may be simplified. Some components may even be lost. The attitudes attached to these ideas may change their quality and intensity. The existence of social constructs in time and their mutability over an extended period of time is significant, because it affords us yet another proof of their constructed nature.

2.1.2 Race as a Sociocultural Construct

In attempting to define race we enter a very controversial field with grave historical underpinnings and therefore it is our wish to undertake its investigation in a neutral manner without possible offence. Moreover, race is a terrain of investigation of great uncertainty and volatility, as it manifests itself in the voluminous literature that has so far been accumulated in this field, in the variety of theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon, and in the variety of approaches to this concept.

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines race in the most general sense as a "categorization [...] based on phenotypical differences, that is, differences of facial characteristics, skin colour, and so forth" (547). However, the current advances in the natural sciences, especially in genetics, show that there are no existing genotypical differences connected with these physiological differences. Nor would any reputable scientist argue that there exist any innate differences of personality traits or intellectual capacities and capabilities. Thus there are many scientists that defend the so-called "no race" scientific position (Smedley 19).

Yet the "no race" position is largely in conflict with the everyday experience of people in America, where all the social implications of racial divisions are still very deeply felt and experienced to this day (Smedley 19). The explanation of this fact is that race is also a phenomenon of social reality that is experienced as a structuring element of this reality, and that has implications for the status of a person in a society.

The social dimension of race is supported by its cultural dimension. As such race seems to imply a set of meanings that a specific culture has assigned to physiological differences over time and, in this sense, truly constructed it. Thus the social dimension of race as a structuring element in the society at a specific time

seems to be a product of the cultural development of the society up to that point. To say that race is culturally constructed has, as Audrey Smedley argues, a serious consequence in that the specific meanings that make up this construct only make sense within a specific culture. This is because culture possesses a high degree of coherence, and race is thus intricately linked with other meanings and constructs as they exist within one specific culture (9 – 10).

Thus we have established three points from which it is possible to view and define race and we also realize that they are intricately linked with one another. The biological dimension has served as a basis for the cultural construction of the meanings of race and the social dimension of this complex of constructed meanings is a result of the cultural development in a given culture and society up to a given point in time. Given the sociocultural dimension of race we have just shown, all the characteristics of sociocultural constructs we have outlined in chapter 2.1.1 also hold true for it; the concept of race is thus dependent on language for its existence, there is a consensus about its existence in the society, it exists in time and it is thus possible to view it from a synchronic and diachronic point of view. It will be the task of chapter 3 to show the specific development of the sociocultural meanings of race as they developed in the United States deriving from a common European cultural background.

Finally we would like to pay some attention to the actual way race as a sociocultural construct functions and exists in human groups. It seems plausible to say that it exists as a base for social structuring in a society or community. It gives the members of the society or community ground for making presuppositions about one another, but in rather simplified maxims, not in the entire complexity of meanings that are accumulated behind the term. Social psychology labels these pre-existing

expectations or ideas that specific human groups or individuals harbor against each other as stereotypes. In general stereotypes may be positive and negative, although Pierre L. van de Berghe states that "ethnic and racial stereotypes [...] are more frequently negative" (294). The most prominent characteristics of stereotypes are the following: they are often without any grounding in reality or are based on fallacious reasoning. The "function of stereotypes is to justify (rationalize) conduct in relation to that category" (Allport qtd. In van de Berghe 294) of beings at which they are directed. Stereotypes also usually have a strong emotional element attached to them. This emotional element causes the particularly troublesome nature of stereotypes – their relative stability. In order to effect the change of a stereotype it is necessary to change the emotional attitude towards the subject at which the stereotype is directed and this is particularly difficult to achieve (Hayesová 95).

2.1.3 Community

The last of the key terms we want to define is community. A part of our definition will be an attempt to link it with the idea of race. There are two dimensions to the term we want to specify –a physical and a social one. In the physical sense a community is a delineated area with a specific infrastructure such as houses, streets, churches, etc. This area is inhabited by human beings.

The social dimension of community is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* as follows: "The concept of community concerns a particularly constituted set of social relationships based on something which the participants have in common – usually a common sense of identity. It is, to paraphrase Talcott Parsons, frequently used to denote a wide ranging relationship of solidarity over a rather undefined area of life and interests" (Marshall 97). The crucial element of this

definition for our discussion of race and the way it is constructed in a Southern community is the sense of having something in common and it is very well possible to say that the commonly shared racial views constituted no small part of the communal consensus in the US South.

These shared racial beliefs together with stereotypes, as they were discussed above, have a significant implication for life in the community, because they provide an ideological basis for the creation of norms within the community. A norm is defined as a "shared expectation of behavior that connotes what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate" (Marshall 453). There exists a similarity between norms and rules, because they are both prescriptive. The difference between them is that norms "lack the formal status of rules" (Marshall 453).

An important characteristic of norms is that there are two basic ways of dealing with them – conforming to them or not conforming to them. As an implication of these possible approaches, norms tend to produce what we could call a center and a margin in echo of Jacques Derrida's thoughts about "the supplement" (Weinstein 170). That is, those members of the community that do conform to the norms and exhibit the appropriate behavior constitute the center of the community. Those who do not conform are proclaimed as deviant and the rest of the community undertakes the effort to remove such individuals to its margin, with perhaps very little understanding of the fact that the actual existence of a margin allows the center to exist.

2.2 Identity

An attempt to define identity is a similarly volatile and vague enterprise as the effort to propose a definition of race. We want to undertake the definition because it will be indispensable for the discussion of the individual characters of *Light in August*, especially Joe Christmas. To propose such a definition is difficult because of the many different starting points from which this effort may be undertaken and because of the impalpable nature of the subject. The two major forms, under which the the approaches towards the notion of identity may be subsumed, is the psychodynamic and sociological tradition of thought. The common element of these two traditions is that they are both generally oriented against an essentialist understanding of the core of identity. This core was believed throughout history to be the "real me" that exists as a given category and as such remains more or less immutable throughout the entire life of an individual. In contradiction to this, both the above mentioned traditions of thought on the concept of identity accentuate its invented and constructed nature (Marshall 293).

The word identity is derived from the Latin word "identicus", that is the same or identical. In a general sense the term identity indicates a congruence of the inner life and thought of an individual and his actions (Nak 414). However, this congruence is not based on something that is static. As we know from experience and as developmental psychology attests, a person changes innerly and one's actions are also subject to change. If one were to live only with the awareness of the changing self, it would in itself be so destabilizing that it would seriously impede the existence of any human being. Thus the consciousness of having an identity is a very important element of human life, because each individual is able to live only due to a feeling of sameness in the process of change (Nak 414) that identity provides.

For our purposes it is also important to know how identity emerges. In order to have an identity, an individual has to internalize meanings that are present in the society. This process is extremely important, because only by internalizing these meanings is one able to understand other members of the society and interact with them (Berger and Luckmann 149-50), while also comprehending one's own position in the group or community. In this sense "the individual [is] 'taking over' the world in which others already live" (Berger and Luckmann 150).

Internalization happens through the ontogenetic process of socialization that Berger and Luckmann define as a "comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it" (150). The process may be divided into two stages: primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization takes place in childhood and serves the purpose of introduction of an individual into the society and establishing him or her as its member. It is one of the first and most important steps of an individual and this step largely determines his or her future. This primary socialization is only possible through the "significant others" that the individual encounters. He or she cannot choose these most closely linked individuals, they are imposed upon him or her and "their definitions of his situation are posited for him as objective reality" (Berger and Luckmann, 151). Since the individual does not know any other world outside the definitions given to him or her by the "significant others", the world as it is defined by the "significant others" is thus taken as the only possible world. This process is also heavily emotionally charged and it is indeed this deep attachment to the "significant others" and identification with them that makes the process of internalizing the meanings of the society to a large degree possible (Berger and Luckmann 151).

This identification with the others is of great importance for the emergence of the unique identity of an individual, because "by identification with significant others the child becomes capable of identifying himself, of acquiring a subjectively coherent and plausible identity" (Berger and Luckmann 151-2). The individual reflects the attitudes taken towards him or her and thus the child also "learns that he is what he is called" (Berger and Luckmann 152).

Thus we see again the importance of language – it is not only constitutive of the meanings that exist in society as we have shown in relation to sociocultural constructs in chapter 2.1.1, but it is also important for the identity of an individual: language is not only one of the subjects that need to be internalized, it is also a means of producing to some degree what the individual is, that is, his identity. The speech act theory describes this act of naming as performative – "a discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler, 13). However, this statement implies an almost unlimited willpower of the subject that executes the performative act, but this seems to overestimate the power of language. Thus Derrida limits the performative will and power of the subject in his reformulation of the performative and introduces the concept of citation:

> Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"? ...in such a typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the

> entire scene and system of utterance [l'énonciation] (Derrida qtd. in Butler 13).

It seems that performativity is to a large degree constitutive not only of marriages, meeting-openings, etc., but also of many categories that make up the identity of an individual, with race and gender being perhaps the most prominent, since statements that delineate one's gender or race are among the first utterances made about a child right after its birth and constitute the foundations of the child's identity that will develop during the process of socialization.

Secondary socialization in general mirrors the processes that happen during primary socialization with the exception that they take for granted the meanings internalized during primary socialization and build upon them. The process of secondary socialization continues during the entire life of an individual, because one has never fully internalized all the meanings that are present in the society (Berger and Luckmann 166). Furthermore, the meanings internalized during secondary socialization are much less stable in the consciousness of the individual and thus need specific techniques for their fixation. The introduction to the meanings internalized during secondary socialization happens also through "significant others", but the relationship is much more anonymous and does not have to be accompanied by identification with the other.

3. Historical and Cultural Construction of the Notion of Race

In the previous chapter we showed that race is a social and cultural construct that evolves over time. However, this statement only illustrates the mechanics that are hidden behind race as an idea, but it does not say anything about the actual meanings that are brought forth in the process of constructing and that actually came into existence throughout the history of race relations on the North American continent. For our undertaking, the mechanics of constructing will be as important as the meanings. This chapter will therefore be devoted to a discussion of the specific meanings that were associated with race throughout the history of the United States. We thus intend to outline the roots of the ideology of race and sketch the evolution of the meanings associated with race throughout the centuries up to the 1930's when William Faulkner wrote *Light in August.*

This is of course a very large and complex undertaking to which many book-length studies have been devoted. Since our inquiry into the theme of race as it actually developed in the United States is not intended as the main part of this project, we find it useful to restrict the scope of our exploration. First of all, it is necessary to restrict ourselves to the specifics of the notion of race with respect to African-Americans because this will be our major focus in investigating *Light in August*[3]. For the same reason we also find it useful to select out of the vast number of sources that cover this theme the following four works: Audrey Smedley's *Race in North America. Origin and Evolution of a Worldview,* Joel Williamson's *The Crucible of Race. Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation*, Judith Berzon's *Neither White Nor Black. The Mulatto Characters in American Fiction* and

[3] Nonetheless, we are aware of the fact that in the name of the ideology of race many wrongs were committed also against the populations of the Native-Americans and this theme becomes of special importance when investigating Faulkner's later works, such as *Go Down, Moses.*

Tomáš Pospíšil's *Sambo tu již nebydlí? Obraz Afroameričanů v americkém filmu 20. století*.

The first explanations for human differences were strongly informed by Christian theological dogmas and interpretations of the Scripture. These explanations were of great importance not only since the Church was the sole source of knowledge for Christians for many centuries but also because the religious explanations were considered as infallible truths. Thus the Church was instrumental in shaping the folk ideas of human differences. The most important scholarly debate held on the theological field was concerned with their origin, i.e. were all human creatures alike the descendants of Adam and Eve, notwithstanding their differences or were they descendants of many repeated acts of creation? Even though the views differed over time, those who argued in favor of multiple creations were in a distinct minority and suffered the fate of the major proponent of this stance, Isaac de la Peyrere from Bordeaux who argued in 1655 that "multitudes of people had been created before Adam who was the founder only of the Jews" (Smedley 159) and who was imprisoned for his views. The majority sided with the theory of the single creation and the darker-skinned peoples were linked with one of Noah's sons, Ham, "whose lineage had been cursed for Ham's failure to avert his eyes when he came upon his father lying naked in drunken stupor" (Smedley 158). This argument was a welcome justification for seeing first the Indians, and later also the black people, as shameless and thus inferior to the white people. The enormous strength of the religious assumptions about human differences can be illustrated also by the fact that they not only guided the thoughts of ordinary people and served as justification for conquest for those in power, but also served as an unquestioned base of the rising scientific research into human differences in the 18th century.

One of the prominent scientific notions of the 18th century that has a theological basis and is of great importance for the development of the idea of race is "The Great Chain of Being". According to Audrey Smedley, this was an idea that permeated all the biological sciences and offered a model of the relations of all living forms to one another. It proposed a hierarchy of all living organisms in a quasi-scientific and quasi-theological manner. "With God at the apex, human beings ranked higher than any other living forms, just below the angels" (Smedley 177) and any being could be placed and graded in this system. As such this concept had its origins in ancient Greek philosophy, persisted throughout the medieval times and was accepted as the unquestioned base of many works of science in the 18th century, but most importantly also of Carolus Linnaeus' taxonomy of living organisms *Systemae Naturae*, the first modern work on this scientific field. The significance of the Great Chain of Being for the development of the concept of race lies in the fact that it propounded the entire world as hierarchizable and stimulated a similar approach to human differences. Thus the notion of the Great Chain of Being "helped to buttress and confirm a hierarchy of cultures that could be ranked or graded along a variety of dimensions from savagery to civilization" (Smedley 178), and this hierarchy served as one of the justifications for the belief in the inferiority of the recently discovered groups of human beings in its seemingly God-given nature.

The 18th century sciences were also to a large degree informative for the ideology of race through the descriptions of non-Europeans they produced. Here Linnaeus' work again proves to be a good example because Linnaeus included humans into his taxonomy. He divided the genus "Homo" into four basic groups – *Europaeus, Americanus, Asiaticus and Africanus* - and the later editions of his work also included their descriptions:

Americanus: reddish, choleric, and erect; hair black, straight, thick; wide nostrils, scanty beard; obstinate, merry, free; paints himself with fine red lines; regulated by customs.

Asiaticus: sallow, melancholy, stiff; hair black; dark eyes; severe, haughty, avaricious; covered with loose garments; ruled by opinions.

Africanus: black, phlegmatic, relaxed; hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat; lips tumid; women without shame, they lactate profusely; crafty, indolent, negligent; anoints himself with grease; governed by caprice.

Europaeus: white, sanguine, muscular; hair long, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive; covers himself with close vestments; governed by law (Smedley 164).

It is apparent that these descriptions fuse together indiscriminately the physical, behavioral, psychological and distinctly cultural traits and this fact illustrates the state of science at its onset, when it was to a significant degree lacking the open-minded approach and detached point of view we associate with science these days. More significantly, it also illustrates a specific way of thinking about human differences that presumes that behavior and temperament are innate, not a matter of individual and cultural variation. This mode of thinking became most prominent in the 19th century, when a major part of the characteristics of human beings was attributed to hereditary factors. It is also specifically this way of thinking that formed the background and strengthened the various stereotypes of African-Americans as they became prominent in the 19th century. Moreover, these descriptions not only show the deep cultural chauvinism of the descendants of the European culture vis-á-vis the newly encountered human beings, but they also form the basis of one of the central

components of race – racial determinism, i. e. the process of explaining cultural differences through biological features.

Besides these scientific and religious notions, many folk ideas also informed the roots of the ideology of race. One such folk idea was the notion of savagery that the early English settlers brought with them to America. This view had its origin in their first encounters with the Irish in the 12th century when Henry II first invaded Ireland, and developed fully in the 17th century. The underlying cause of this thinking was a conflict between the English and the Irish. It was essentially a clash of two cultures because the Irish were "nomadic or seminomadic pastoralists" (Smedley 54) who roamed the vast spans of land freely and in accordance with the needs of their animals, whereas the English were sedentary agriculturalists in want of land which they hoped to gain from the Irish. The extreme ethnic chauvinism of the English, together with attempts to conquer the Irish lands spanning over many centuries, bred the idea of barbarism of the Irish and their less than human, savage status in the mind of the English. They were seen as godless, immoral, lazy, filthy and superstitious liars and thieves, who were lusty, licentious and at times given to cannibalism (Smedley 60). The Irish increasingly came to be viewed as incapable of being brought to civilization from their savage way of life and consequently the only way of bringing them under some form of control was through enslavement. Given the fact that the experience with the Irish was the most intensive encounter of the English with another culture before their arrival in the New World, it is not surprising that they brought these ideas with them and readily applied them to the Indians and the black people. Moreover, the idea of savagery was quite abstract and thus lent itself very well to such transfer, so that already in the 17th century "there was a

general sense that the Irish, the Africans and the Indians were all more or less savages" (Smedley 94) and thus inferior to the English and their culture.

In considering race on the North American continent, one of the most important and most intriguing questions is how much this notion was at its onset caused by slavery. There are many theories that roughly divide into two groups: the first group of theories claims that slavery could not have emerged without a preexisting racial bias and the second group of theories claims that racial bias could not have come into existence without the condition of enslavement of one group of human beings by another. Given the volatile nature of race and the impossibility to trace down every aspect that may have contributed to the development of the concept as we have already seen in the previous discussions, the most probable explanation seems to be the one given by Winthrop Jordan who avers that

> rather than slavery causing [racial] 'prejudice' or vice versa, they seem rather to have generated each other. Both were [...] twin aspects of a general debasement of the Negro. Slavery and 'prejudice' may have been equally cause and effect, continuously reacting upon each other, dynamically joining hands to hustle the Negro down the road to complete degradation" (Jordan qtd. in Smedley 100).

Yet we cannot overlook the fact that the ideology of race was increasingly used to justify slavery as an institution that had a deep economic importance for the US South and enabled many individuals to accumulate great wealth and subsequently afforded them a lifestyle of luxury known as "the Southern way of life". We also have to acknowledge together with Audrey Smedley that the issue of slavery was of great controversy even at the times of its existence and led such thinkers as Thomas Jefferson to propound such contradictory ideas as the equality of men and the

inherent inferiority of the black people. The latter was discussed at great length in his work *Notes on Virginia* (1786) (Smedley 192-202).

Just as slavery and the existence of prejudice against other ethnic groups fostered the emergence of race ideology, it was also the sentiment that went against this thinking – the antislavery movement – that indirectly contributed to it and solidified it. The rise of antislavery sentiments occurred during the 18th century and the subsequent pressure of antislavery movements gathered strength. One of the strongest groups was led by William Lloyd Garrison who founded a newspaper "The Liberator" in the 1830s, a time of very strong debates about slavery. The antislavery ideas had two major sources - the idea of Christian charity towards fellow human beings (Smedley 208-9) and the Enlightenment thoughts on the nature of life, liberty and reason as the governing principle of human existence (Smedley 208). The abolitionist pressure was instrumental in hardening the position of race in that it led the proslavery forces to defend the "peculiar institution" with great vigor, since the economy and culture of the entire South was highly dependent on it and abolitionist pressures posed a great threat. As the antislavery pressures gained momentum, so did the fervor of the defendants of slavery and the argument of the racial inferiority of the black people rendered itself very well for its defense since it was supported by science and popular beliefs, as we have shown before. Smedley argues that by the mid-nineteenth century it had superseded all other arguments and established itself as the most deeply rooted component of the ideology of race (219).

So far we have regarded race as an ideology that was oriented towards the non-Europeans. However, since first the English and subsequently also the Americans participated in this ideology and indeed had the greatest power in shaping it, they not only had to find reasons for denigrating the non-Europeans, but also for

finding ways of elevating themselves above the others. They increasingly chose to identify as Anglo-Saxons and at first this new identity was not racial. The English established it during the 16th century in order to justify their breach with the Catholic Church. This identity was above all based on declaring themselves as the heirs of their Germanic forebears who were a "freedom-loving people, enjoying representative institutions and a flourishing primitive democracy" (Horsman qtd. in Smedley 189), and therefore the excellence of the English social system derived from them. The racial turn of the idea of Anglo-Saxonism came simultaneously with the full flowering of the idea of race at the end of the 18th century. The more this ideology ensnared the non-Europeans in their supposedly innate inferiority, the more it elevated the supposed Anglo-Saxons and professed their cultural and biological superiority. The superiority of the Anglo-Saxons became a part of American mythology and its most significant offspring – the doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the name of which the Americans undertook to expand over the entire North American continent and dominate the Native-Americans and the black people.

The conflict over slavery not only gathered momentum by the mid-nineteenth century, but also the image of the black people and their inferiority came to be simplified and solidified in the minds of the whites into a few stereotypes like Uncle Tom, Uncle Remus, Pickaninny or Aunt Jemima. Out of all these images the most general one was the stereotype of the Sambo[4] that came to govern the perception of the black people for many decades to come. Joel Williamson argues that this was not a straightforward image, because it ascribed a distinctly double-sided nature to the black people. On the one hand Sambo was regarded as an intellectually retarded, careless, childish, yet content person (Williamson, The Crucible of Race 23). The

[4] The name was derived from one of the most popular names for male slaves in the South (Williamson, The Crucible of Race 22).

outer signs of his behavior were lowered eyes, softly and uncertainly spoken words, shuffling feet, deference to white opinions and the acceptance of insult (Smedley 223). For the part of the black people themselves, "playing Sambo" was a way of escaping the occasional color-coded hysterias of the whites, but hardly any black person internalized it as an identity. On the other hand, Sambo was seen as a bestial and lusty being. In addition to that, during the periods of racial radicalism (1889-1915) this image was strengthened by the image of the black man as a rapist (Williamson, The Crucible of Race 23).

Although the double nature of Sambo was well-established by the mid-nineteenth century, the two sides of Sambo's existence were never in a state of equilibrium in the white mind. The preference for the one or the other varied with the sense of the white majority feeling in control. Thus it is not surprising that the childish side of Sambo was preferred in the antebellum years. Subsequently there was a clear shift to the "negro beast" and "rapist" side of Sambo during the period of Reconstruction and afterwards, which was caused by the white fear of large numbers of black people roaming the country without the control of the white people and possibly plotting against their former masters. As a consequence, the number of lynchings increased sharply, especially in the 1890's. After the tumultuous emotions of this period the South returned to the image of Sambo as a child in the 1920's,only the child was allowed to become a "child-like young adult" (Williamson, The Crucible of Race 463) into whom some degree of trust could be put. Disregarding the occasional flashbacks of the image of the rapist, the image of Neo-Sambo, as Williamson describes this turn in Southern thinking (The Crucible of Race 462), was strong enough to persist until the times of the Civil Rights Movement.

So far we have presented the ideology of race as a clear-cut opposition of black and white. However, such a representation would be a gross simplification of the overall situation, since the close contacts of the two groups occasioned a distinct rise in the population of people of mixed origin – mulattoes. This term was originally reserved for those individuals whose parents were both 'full bloods' and as a result the offspring was half black and half white. However, Judith Berzon points out that it is often used so as to include also quadroons and octoroons and indistinguishable mixtures (8). In spite of the ideology of race that separated the white and black people from one another, the number of mulattoes was by no means slight. Even though there were no polls taken, it is estimated that by 1860 13-20% of the black population had white ancestors (Berzon 11) and to a large degree the offspring of mixed origin was produced in the sexual unions of the white masters and their female slaves. The fact that many mulattoes had an all-but-white appearance altered nothing about their legal status, because according to the so-called one-drop-rule they were still black. This rule was yet another way of keeping up the system of clear distinctions between those in power and those enslaved, because it did not allow any fracturing of the power the white people had over the black people. Moreover, this rule in effect denied that any miscegenation happened at all. Yet this system was not fully reliable, since it allowed many light skinned mulattoes to "pass" for white and live their lives among the whites.

The necessity to fit a specific racial category occasioned a specific response on the side of the mulattoes. They usually could not fully embrace their identity as black people because such an identity sharply contrasted with how they saw themselves and they were not accepted in the community of the black people because "many darker-skinned Negroes have felt resentment toward, and envy of,

those with lighter-colored skin and Caucasian features" (Berzon 14). Furthermore, Berzon points out that many darker-skinned African-Americans despised the mulattoes for their pretentious behavior (14). On the other hand, the above mentioned one-drop-rule prevented the mulattoes from joining the white middle-class with which they wanted to identify the most. It is thus apparent that the mulattoes were "a third party in a system built for two" (Jordan qtd. in Berzon 11). Out of this mixture the minds of the white people fabricated the stereotype of the tragic mulatto who is almost white, beautiful, intelligent and pure, yet in conflict with the savage heritage of his black blood which threatens to erupt any moment. This stereotype is again a product of white racial thinking because it shows that miscegenation only brings despair to those concerned and consequently should be better avoided (Pospíšil 19). This fear of miscegenation and the hidden blackness that may spring from it turned against some white people at the beginning of the twentieth century when those who sided closely with the black people came to be called "white niggers". Such people were perfectly white genetically, yet their interest in the fate of the black people cast a shadow of moral blackness over them, often also with suggestions of sexual transgression (Williamson, The Crucible of Race 465). This idea clearly illustrates the tendency of the idea of blackness to become ever more abstract, after the individual personalities of the black people were simplified and flattened into a few stereotypical images.

In this chapter we have tried to trace the roots of the idea of race and we have seen that they derive primarily from religious and scientific thought and folk ideas about human differences. The uniting principle of these strands of thought is the idea of the inferiority of the black people that stands in contrast to the belief in the cultural and biological superiority of the white people. All these elements combined to

produce in the white mind stereotypical ways of perceiving the black people, especially Sambo as both the naïve child and brutal rapist and the tragic mulatto. To a certain degree many of the elements of the ideology of race remain a part of our thinking about human differences in a more or less altered way up to this day, as all of us are occasionally witnesses to the continuing prejudice based on physical and cultural difference. Ever more so, these elements were an indelible part of the thinking and deeds during the lifetime of William Faulkner. The task of finding out how all these elements are present in his novel *Light in August* and how he dealt with them and distilled them into fictional form will take up the following chapters.

4. Constructing Race in the Community

Thadious Davis argues in her seminal study *Faulkner and "Negro". Art and Southern Context* that "in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) Faulkner resumes the theme of the necessary apotheosis of society's 'nigger' into myth" (179-180). It is plausible to argue that this enterprise would have been infinitely more difficult without Faulkner's previous novel – *Light in August*. It is in this novel that Faulkner begins to question race as a major structuring principle of the Southern world and shows its essentially constructed nature. It will be the task of this chapter to show not only what meanings are connected with race, but also how they are constructed, how they circulate in the community and what role they play in the structuring of the life of the community.

4.1 – Insiders, Outsiders and Outcasts – the Status of Characters in Jefferson

In order to start a discussion of the community in Jefferson and the way it constructs race, we should first have a look at the way the community functions with respect to its members. Bleikasten points out that the major characters of *Light in August* "are all outsiders, if not outcasts" (Bleikasten 1987, 81) and this is certainly a stance one can agree with and plausibly defend, but we would like to extend it. It was also shown on a more theoretical basis in chapter 2.1.3 that a community may evict or accept its members based on their compliance with its norms. Based on this level of compliance we would like to introduce three categories of community members: insiders, outsiders and outcasts. Even though the usual approach to this division of the Jefferson community is discussed in terms of delineating the main characters as outcasts, we find it more helpful to establish three categories because such an approach opens up space for a more subtle discussion of the dynamic inside the

community. By introducing this division we also take into consideration the fact that the novel encompasses events from the year 1812 until the present-time actions of 1932 (Ruppersburgh 305-11) and thus there is a time span of 120 years that presents a long time period and thus also a substantial possibility for the change of status of the members of the community. We take this to be a tendency, in introducing these divisions we do not wish to erase the individual characteristics and fates of the characters. It is specifically the dynamic of becoming an outsider, outcast or insider that has found little attention in its complexity in critical works so far[5] and showing this dynamic will be the focus of the following discussion.

4.1.1 - Insiders

The insiders are hardest to define, since the reader encounters only a limited sample of the true, fully integrated members of the Jefferson community. They are mostly described in general terms like "the people" or "the town" and only occasionally do the representatives of the community actually have a name, for example the sheriff Watt Kennedy, the foreman Mooney or Mrs. Beard, the keeper of the boarding house where Byron Bunch stays. Through this move Faulkner accentuates the fact that the heart of the community, the insiders, function as a mass, hardly ever as individuals.

If one were nevertheless to take a closer look at the members of the Jefferson community, it seems as though they could be described in the same way as the sawmill workers, whose everyday lives are the closest glimpse of the ordinary routine of living in Jefferson the reader gets throughout the entire novel. Faulkner describes them as leading a "catholic variety of lives" (Faulkner 41), even though he

[5] See Brooks 53 and Bleikasten 81

suggests that they are no saints, because "they drank and gambled on Saturday night and even went to Memphis now and then. Yet on Monday morning they came quietly and soberly to work" (Faulkner 41) and thus one sees that even though their lives are not devoid of worldly pleasures, they still accept and follow the norms the community shares. Faulkner reinforces the importance of complying with the norms by stating that "to come clean to work on Monday morning was no more than seemly and right to do" (Faulkner 41).

4.1.2 Outsiders

Another volatile category of community members are the outsiders. This category is to be understood as mediating between the insiders and the outcasts. These characters are not fully integrated into the community because of some of their idiosyncrasies that the community does not understand or endorse. Yet they interact with the other members and have physical access to the communities, they move around freely without any obstructions or threat of punishment.

Such is the case of Joe at the time of his arrival in Jefferson. Even though the way the men at the mill first see him is full of ambiguity – "He looked like a tramp, yet not like a tramp either" (Faulkner 31). Furthermore "His face [was] darkly and contemptuously still" (Faulkner 32) and the men found this look on his face rather outrageous. Upon hearing his second name and realizing its strangeness, the men begin to speculate about his race – "Did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas?" (Faulkner 33). Even though "he did not talk to any of them at all [,] and none of them tried to talk to him" (Faulkner 34), they still allow him to share the public

space with them for three years[6] until the time of his murder of Joanna[7]. This is evident from the fact that during this time period he comes to work and the narrator also mentions that he occasionally has dinner in town.

A little less dramatic case of being an outsider is that of Byron Bunch, who also shares the common space with other members of the community. Together with Joe and Lena he is the character that does the most "getting around", as Lena so memorably puts it. Yet he is a character "who for seven years had been a minor mystery to the town" (Faulkner 421) and "whom even fewer of the country people that knew either the murderer or the murdered, knew by name or habit" (Faulkner 416). It is thus apparent that Byron is, just like Joe, not fully integrated into the community.

In the same way as Byron and Joe, Euphues Hines is also an outsider of the community. The community does not accept him as a personality, saying about him and his wife "they are crazy; crazy on the subject of negroes. Maybe they are Yankees" (Faulkner 341). However, he is also free to move about town; indeed, "he was a fixture about the square" (Faulkner 342). Yet his position is close to that of an outcast, due to the fact that he lives "in a neighborhood of negroes" (Faulkner 340). In the Southern context this choice of an abode and consequent association with the black people would certainly not identify him as an insider of the community; it gives him a tinge of "Otherness" that the black people in the South carried.

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[6] We have calculated this figure using the chronology of events in *Light in August* of Hugh Ruppersburgh. Since Joe arrives in Jefferson in August 1929, exactly three years elapse before he murders Joanna in August 1932. See Ruppersburgh 305-311 for the entire chronology.

[7] For the purposes of this thesis we find it sufficient to accept Joe Christmas as a murderer, even though John N. Duvall questions this clear characterization in his article "Murder and the Communities: Ideology in and around *Light in August*" and shows that Joe might have actually committed the killing in self-defense.

Furthermore, Hines is dependent on the black people for food and for 25 years has not held any position to give him wages to subsist on. The narrator comments on this fact in the following manner: "In time the town either forgot or condoned, because Hines was an old man and harmless, that which in a young man it would have crucified" (Faulkner 341). This comment shows that his position even as an outsider is dependent on a fallacy of the community reasoning and it amply illustrates how relatively unstable is one's position in the community. Consequently for all the faulty functioning of the communal judgement, there is an underlying threat for Hines of becoming an outcast, in the same way that this process is at work in the case of Gail Hightower, as will be demonstrated in chapter 4.2.

4.1.3 Outcasts

At the other extreme of the community are the outcasts. They are the characters on the margin of the community that are defined by not complying with various norms of the community, above all the norms that concern religion, race and morality. If one considers as decisive the present-time events of *Light in August*, i.e. the August days of 1932, then the outcasts are Joanna Burden and Joe Christmas on account of their troublesome connection with race, Gail Hightower because of his problematic entrapment in the myth of his heroic grandfather and his confusing fusion of religion and this myth, and Byron Bunch due to his outrageous connection with the unmarried, yet pregnant Lena.

This division manifests itself above all in that, unlike the outsiders, these characters have very little spatial interaction with the community. They usually occupy confined spaces that were reserved for them: Joanna never ventures outside

her mansion, and on the one occasion that is mentioned in which she does so, she is clearly demarcated as a "Nigger lover" (Faulkner 292) and thus also as an outcast, given the fact that any involvement of white people with black was highly suspect in the Southern context and consequently led to the marginalization of these whites.

The case is similar with Gail Hightower, whose confinement to one space is so intense that it is reminiscent of being buried alive, and Byron remarks on several occasions on the pervasive smell of Hightower's body – "that smell of people who no longer live in life: that odor of overplump dessication and stale linen as though a precursor of the tomb" (Faulkner 318).

After the murder of Joanna, and even more so after Joe Brown pronounces him to be black, Joe Christmas also becomes an outcast. He is thus confined to the spaces outside of the community and it entirely outrages the community in Mottstown to find that he was walking down the street before Halliday recognized him, since this daring enterprise is a grave transgression against the status he had been assigned.

The case of Byron lacks the drama of the fates of the characters previously mentioned, yet Mrs Beard gives him the hint that his presence is no longer welcome – "And so I reckon you'll be leaving us. I reckon you kind of feel like you have wore [sic] out Jefferson, dont you?" (Faulkner 420). Consequently, by following Lena Byron becomes an outcast[8]. As far as his spatial interaction with the community is concerned, he moves outside of the town and after the birth of Lena's baby leaves for good. It is more than telling that his current abode is the place where Joanna, as one of the outcasts with the longest standing, lived. It will be the task of the following arguments to show how Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower especially move between

[8] John N. Duvall argues in favor of Byron's marginalization after his encounter with Lena and thus counters Brooks' reading of Byron's involvement with Lena, which suggests that Byron only becomes a member of the community – a true insider - only after he falls in love with Lena (102).

these three categories and how fragile and fluid these categories and one's position in community actually are.

4.2 – The Mechanism of Becoming an Outcast - the Case of Gail Hightower as a Premonition of the Case of Joe Christmas

Besides the case of Joe and the way the community constructs his racial identity, thus making him into an outcast, the most remarkable narrative of becoming an outcast is the story of Gail Hightower. It is highly informative for further discussion of Joe Christmas in that it shows the mechanisms of casting a fully integrated member of the community, an insider – for who else but a preacher should be a central character in a Southern community as deeply religious as Jefferson - out of its center and assigning him the role of an outcast, as it was already shown to be his status in the Lena storyline. Most importantly, the case of Hightower offers a valuable insight into the way the community uses language and the idea of race in the process of constructing the status and identity of its members.

4.2.1 Gail Hightower and Joe Christmas – Parallels and Intersections

The discussion of the case of Hightower and the close link to Joe is justified by the fact that their fates are parallel in many major and minor ways, even though their actual storylines intersect only at the very end of Joe's life. For the purposes of our discussion the most important parallel between them is the way that the course of their lives is rooted in words or stories imposed upon them. In the case of Hightower it is the story of his heroic grandfather who "killed men 'by the hundreds'" (Faulkner 477) as it was told to him by the old black servant Cinthy. Subsequently, his life is governed by this myth because he chooses to prefer the romantic myth of chivalry connected with the Civil War to its reality, which is represented by his father's uniform and the marks of real battle it carried. He is fully in the grips of his romantic vision when he negotiates to preach in Jefferson and when he is finally seated there he spends his evenings "waiting for twilight to cease, for night and the galloping hooves"

(Faulkner 468) in order to relive the heroic moments before the death of his grandfather and the single moment in which he himself was alive. Similarly, Joe's racial identity is also made up of words[9], in that Euphues Hines, his grandfather, claims that Joe's father was black and Joe's life is marked by his struggle with this legacy.

In contrast to the parallels between the lives of these two characters which can be found throughout the entire novel, the moments when the stories of these two characters intersect, or rather touch, only come later in the novel. The first significant contact happens through the retelling of the story of Joe's early life and the fates of the Hines family. Byron subsequently pleas with Hightower that he should attempt to save Joe by declaring that they were together the night that the murder of Joanna was committed. In order to save Joe, Hightower should expose himself to allegations of homosexuality with suggestions of transgressing the color line and thus reviving the memories of his racialized demise from the heart of the community about 25 years before.

The actual physical encounter of the two characters happens shortly before Joe's death in the form of a strike Hightower receives from Joe who is on the run before his final surrender to his pursuer – Percy Grimm. This brief encounter and Joe's death in Hightower's home are equally important for further development of Hightower as a character. Berland argues that "he comes to recognize that his wife's suicide was in fact his own murder of her, less flamboyantly violent than Joe's murder of Joanna, but equally heinous" (51).

Besides these significant parallels and intersections there also exists a rather subtle, yet quite crude humorous link between the two characters – after becoming

[9] For a more detailed discussion of Joe Christmas' identity see chapter 5.1

an outcast, Hightower attempts to make his living as an art instructor, creator of Christmas and anniversary cards and by developing photographs. At the death of Joe – one named Christmas and repeatedly referred to as "parchmentcolored" (Faulkner 34 and 120) and thus also a man who is to be "written on" (Weinstein, *What Else but Love?* 170) – he witnesses the "creation" of the most memorable "Christmas card" for the community – the mutilated body upon which Percy Grimm as a representative of the community finally and irrevocably inscribes the fate of a black murderer and putative rapist of white women.

4.2.2 Gail Hightower – Insider to Outcast

Hightower's first step towards becoming an outcast is his extraordinary approach to his profession and to religion which stems from his traumatic relation to his parents and his subsequent full embracing of the myth of the heroic life of his grandfather. Thus the community felt that he was "using religion as though it were a dream [...] as if he couldn't get religion and that galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse untangled from each other, even in the pulpit" (Faulkner 61-62). The community did not like it and this dislike is an indicator of the fact that he is not performing satisfactorily as a preacher and thus does not fulfill the norm.

The dislike in the community is furthermore intensified by Hightower's inability to manage his personal life – "he could not untangle [the galloping horses, his grandfather and religion] in his private life, at home either, perhaps" (Faulkner 62). The word "perhaps" shows that Hightower's inept behavior as a husband is only vaguely perceived, but finally turns into a full-blown scandal, when his wife is found dead in Memphis – "she had jumped or fallen from a hotel window in Memphis Saturday night [...]. There had been a man in the room with her. [...] They were

registered as man and wife, under a fictitious name" (Faulkner 67). This unmistakable case of adultery implies that Hightower fails to fulfill his role as a husband, which is all the worse in that the community tacitly shares the view that a Christian priest and the members of his family are supposed to serve as a model of morality. Because his wife offends this notion, Hightower's position in the community is shaken once again. As a consequence the elders of the community lock him out of the church and thus force him to resign from his position despite his unwillingness to do so of his own impulse.

The moment when the community forces Hightower to resign is worth further analysis, because it clearly illustrates that Faulkner's community is not only constituted by a set of norms, however tacitly they are understood. These norms constitute the base of the power the community has over its members, as the case of Hightower has amply demonstrated. To put it in Brook's phrase "the community is the powerful though invisible force that quietly exerts itself in so much of Faulkner's work" (52). Brooks claims this force to be a positive one (69), which we find together with Bleikasten to be a statement impossible to defend: "The community cannot be exonerated of all guilt" (82) The logic of this argumentation will become apparent from the following passage: "Then the town was sorry with being glad, as people sometimes are sorry for those whom they have at last forced to do as they wanted them to" (Faulkner 70). The mixed feelings of being sorry and glad at the same time show that the people are sorry for Hightower, but they are glad that the order they have known and conformed to has been affirmed and preserved by casting Hightower out from their midst. Furthermore, the usage of the verb "forced" suggests violence – violence committed in the name of conformity – and that certainly cannot be perceived as something positive, as it will become clear also from further

instances when the push and pull of the community will prove to be a major force driving the narrative.

Hightower finally offends the Jefferson community by refusing to leave for any other town and becomes a true outcast. In this sense Hightower is unlike Byron, who takes the hint and leaves (Duvall 102), all the more so as he is in pursuit of the traveling Lena. Thus Hightower causes the community "the consternation, the more than outrage [sic], when they learned that he had bought the little house on the back street where he now lives" (Faulkner 70). It is at this point that the community begins to use language to reinforce Hightower's status as an outcast by constructing gossip about his life and vilifying him in the process: he buys a house in Jefferson, does so without using the money the community has collected for him, and thus shows his intention to stay in Jefferson. A short while after that "there were some who said that he had insured his wife's life and then paid someone to murder her" (Faulkner 71).

Subsequently the narrator tells the reader that "everyone knew that this was not so, including the ones who told and repeated it and the ones who listened when it was told" (Faulkner 71). This is an important passage because it shows the mechanism of telling and retelling as a means of spreading gossip in the community. This mechanism as such proves to be a means of strengthening the ties in the community, since it shows the participation of those who tell the gossip, those who retell it, and those who listen in one larger process. Still this process is empty and its emptiness manifests itself in that the community not only circulates lies, but does so consciously and without subverting or questioning the meanings that are circulated. Thus it seems that it is just the sheer circulation of words, not circulation of meaning that constitutes the coherence of the community. By showing that the words have no substance Faulkner makes their power all the more dreadful, in that even though the

words have no meaning, they still have the power to shape the life of an individual and cast him out of the community's center and transform him into a marginal character.

The "telling and retelling" is not only important as a theme that spans throughout the novel and as a mechanism of producing outcasts, but it is also important as an element that is repeated in the narrative structure. This structural principle is used in the section of Hightower's decline from insider of the community to the position of an outcast, since this entire part is presented by the narrator as something that the community members told Byron Bunch upon his arrival in Jefferson seven years before the time of the Lena storyline. Thus this narrative strategy of "telling about the telling" mainly underscores the effect of the thematic thread in that it establishes "the telling and retelling" as something that fully influences the development of the novel as well as something upon which the power and coherence of the community are based and also something that is continuously present in the community.

Hightower's status as an outcast is not only reinforced through the telling and retelling, but also through introducing race as a concept that in the Southern context has the power to mark an individual as "the Other". This marking happens in the moment that the community remembers that Hightower "still kept the cook, a negro woman. He had had her all the time" (Faulkner 71). Again, language is employed in spreading gossip about Hightower's supposed *liaison* with the black cook as the cause of his wife's suicide and Hightower is proclaimed as "not a natural husband" (Faulkner 71). Thus this time the talk is intensified through a suggestion of miscegenation and through this hint Faulkner activates an entire backlog of the Southern fear and justifies violent coercive action of "a party of carelessly masked

men [who] went to the minister's house and ordered him to fire [the negro cook]" (Faulkner 71). At the same time Faulkner undermines the community's outrage at this possibility of miscegenation by showing its hypocrisy, since the possibility of miscegenation exists, but is not pursued with the same intensity in the case of insiders of the community: "it was known that there were two or three men in the town who would object to her doing whatever it was she considered contrary to God and nature" (Faulkner 72).

The explosive mixture of gossip and fear of miscegenation is further brought to a frenetic pitch by a suggestion of homosexuality, when Hightower hires a black male cook, who immediately receives a whipping and Hightower himself is also beaten unconscious by the KKK. Yet even after this episode, Hightower refuses to embrace his fate as an outcast; he does not leave the community as all other outcasts do. Hightower becomes a paradox – an outcast who spatially creates a bubble inside the homogenous community. As all outcasts, he has very limited contact with the majority and the prevalent image of him is that of seclusion on the premises allotted to him.

The hypocrisy of the community is made clear not only through the spreading of gossip no one believes in and yet acts according to it, but also through Byron's thoughts about the story of Hightower's expulsion from the heart of the community. Byron's observations are provocatively accurate and it is possible to argue that they are such because of his position as an outsider: he is not fully and doggedly involved in the processes that the insiders of the community are involved in, especially the spreading of meaningless gossip. These are his first thoughts the reader encounters:

> Byron listened quietly thinking to himself how people everywhere are about the same, but that it did seem, that in a small town, where evil is harder to accomplish, where opportunities for privacy are scarcer, that people can invent

more of it in other people's names. Because that was all it required: that idea, that single idle word blown from mind to mind (Faulkner 71).

Byron sums up the use of language in the community and shows that the major mechanism is the circulation of words of no substance. His comment is furthermore an indictment of the community in that the gossip in the community is the source of evil and in this sense he once again proves that the community is a pervasive, but, above all, a negative force.

The negative impression of the community is additionally intensified by its tendency to behave in set patterns, rituals. This is also revealed through Byron's point of view: "As though, Byron thought, the entire affair had been a lot of people performing a play and that now they had all played out the parts which had been allotted them and now they could live quietly with one another" (Faulkner 73). This comment clearly shows that the behavior of the community is a stereotypical reaction to a situation, a ritual. The instinctive nature is also reinforced by the fact that the community members do not actively choose their parts, they only do what is expected of them without further deliberation. This only leads one to conclude that by playing out the paradox of the unpremeditated ritual that ruins the life of an individual, Faulkner again intended to show the community in a negative light.

The importance of habit for the life of the community is also apparent from the fact that the community finds it necessary to keep maintaining Hightower's status as an outcast and "the Other" by vilifying him and continually keeping up his imagined connection with the black people even fifteen years after the event of his expulsion. This happens when the black baby dies during his attempt to help the mother give birth. The community accuses him of letting it die deliberately, because it was his child. Thus Byron again thinks "that the town had had the habit of saying things about

the disgraced minister which they did not believe themselves" (Faulkner 74), that is they still spread gossip about Hightower without questioning or verifying it. As a consequence Byron shows it to be yet another community ritual without a sound grounding in reality: "'Because always,' he thinks 'when anything gets to be a habit, it also manages to get a right good distance away from truth and fact'" (Faulkner 74).

4.3 – Constructing Race in the Community

4.3.1 – Constructing Blackness

If we are now to turn to an examination of the actual mode of existence of the notions of race in the community, the story of Hightower's expulsion from the heart of the community has been informative in the sense that it clearly demonstrates the overwhelming rule of language in the process of constructing an outcast. The power of language is all the more paradoxical in that it serves the purpose of circulating meaningless gossip. Even though this gossip is recognized as such, it still has power of shaping an individual human fate. In this process of communication the basic and most abstract meaning of race and blackness in the Southern context was conveyed - that of "Otherness". In the case of Hightower, Faulkner used this abstract notion to show that the community thus reinforces Hightower's status as an outcast, because in the Southern context the sole association with blackness could be detrimental, as the notion of the "white nigger" attests[10] and as the fate of Joanna and Joe Christmas in *Light in August* will yet amply demonstrate.

Besides the notion of "Otherness" that marks Hightower and contributes to maintaining his status as an outcast the passage about the outrage with Hightower's black cook also plays out, in a scene full of sexual innuendo, a specific stereotype connected with black people – their lustiness, perversity and general tendency towards badness. Thus when the black cook pronounces that she has quit "because her employer asked her to do something which she said was against God and nature" (Faulkner 71), one of the young men comments upon it in the following manner: "if a nigger woman considered it against God and nature, it must be pretty bad" (Faulkner 72).

[10] See chapter 3 for an explanation of the concept of the "white nigger"

The stereotype of excessive sexual desire of the black people was more determining historically for the existence of black males as it froze into the stereotype of the black beast rapist who lusts after white women. Faulkner shows the operation of this stereotype in the community at the moment when the members of the community gather to look at the dead body of Joanna Burden. The narrator comments on the scene in the following manner:

> [Then came the sheriff] who thrust away those who crowded to look down at the body on the sheet with that static and childlike amaze with which adults contemplate their own inescapable portraits. Among them the casual Yankees and the poor whites and the southerners who had lived for a while in the north, who believed that it was an anonymous negro crime committed not by negro but by Negro and who knew, believed and hoped that she had been ravished too: at least once before her throat was cut and at least once afterward (Faulkner 288).

As Dondlinger argues, the unanimous reaction of the crowd stems from the fact that the victim is a white woman (102) and the murderer used a razor - a "black" weapon (Roberts 183); thus the perpetrator cannot be anyone else but a black male. The criminal is not "a negro", i.e. an individual with a unique set of motifs for the crime; the culprit is "Negro" – an image of the black person in the mind of the white people. In that it is possible to claim that "Negro" is a stereotypical image of black people it is possible to agree with Thadious Davis that it is "an ominous abstraction" (Davis 131) - it can encompass individuals in all their diversity of thought, beliefs and actions and subject them to a single possible negative interpretation.

The scene when the community looks at Joanna's corpse is intensely rich with stereotypes and serves as another scathing indictment of the community in that not

even those who have had the chance to imbibe other notions about black people – those who either came from or visited the North - did not do so. Both Southerners and Northerners are thus fully complicitous in the world of the stereotypes concerning race and are thus "linked by their stereotyped conception of the 'brute Negro', who maniacally rapes his white victim whether or not she is alive" (Davis 131). In a less literal sense especially the presence of the Northerners makes it possible to extend this indictment to all of America as participating in the stereotypes associated with race. Moreover, it is striking how unanimously and without any attempt to investigate, the crowd labels the murder as a crime committed by a black person and thus it seems to be safe to argue that intense stereotyping must be at work here.

The working of the stereotype of the "negro" beast rapist in the scene of sighting Joanna's dead body has a significant implication for her status as an outcast in the community: it has been argued that due to her familial background and her subsequent embrace of the history of her family with its "burden" of involvement in the issues of race and defense of black people, her lifelong status in the community was that of an outcast, a "niggerlover" and thus, similarly as Hightower, "the Other". Yet in the moment when the community discovers her dead body and by the strength of the workings of the stereotype of the white womanhood despoiled by the "negro beast rapist" the entire troublesome history of her family and her personal engagement in favor of black people is obliterated and Joanna becomes white (Sundquist 82). Thus in her death she symbolically gains admittance into the community that has ostracized her her entire life, she becomes an insider. This is because she can finally be placed unambiguously as a white woman. Deborah Clarke voices a similar notion when she claims that "by forcing [Joanna] into the

position of the violated woman, the town can erase the disturbing elements her presence has inspired" (405), i.e. above all her association with the black people.

The scene of the discovery of Joanna's dead body is not only a commentary on the strength of stereotypes in the community, but it once more sets the scene as a ritual and so it parallels the situation of Hightower's expulsion from the community, only this time to the opposite effect of a symbolic admittance into the community. The narrator describes the scene in the following manner:

> And soon nobody could remember exactly where the sheet had rested, what earth it had covered, and so then there was only the fire to look at. So they looked at the fire, with that same dull and static amaze which they had brought down from the old fetid caves where knowing began, as though, like death they had never seen fire before (Faulkner 288).

It is the invocation of the rituals of prehistoric times that shows the coherence of the community in their involvement in stereotypes, since the narrator suggests that they have been in existence for a long time.

The feeling of connection with times long gone is furthermore underscored by the following scene of the arrival of the modern fire truck: "It was new, painted red with gilt trim and a handpower siren and a bell gold in color and in tone serene, arrogant and proud. [...] It had mechanical ladders that sprang to prodigious heights at the touch of a hand like opera hats" (Faulkner 288). Regardless of its modernity it proves absolutely ineffectual, unlike the stereotypes, because "there was nothing for [the mechanical ladders to spring to. It had neat and virgin coils of hose [...]; but there was nothing to hook them to and nothing to flow through them" (Faulkner 288) and thus its grand arrival full of noise is a rather comic scene. The prevalence of the ritualistic and stereotypical approach to the murder finally prevails in that even the fire

truck operators as the avatars of modernity arrived "with pistols already in their pockets and began to canvass about for someone to crucify" (Faulkner 289) and thus show their intention to deal with the situation in a stereotypical manner – by killing the perpetrator – and are thus complicitous in the stereotypical beliefs of the community.

4.3.2 – Constructing Whiteness

So far our observations have been concerned with the opinions that the Jefferson community holds about the black people. Since one of our observations has been that the black people are perceived as the "Other" and thus create the margin of the community, it is necessary to look at those who occupy the center that is offset by the margin – the white people (Weinstein "Marginalia" 170). In the following the focus of attention will therefore be the notion upon which the characters that occupy the center construct their centrality – namely the idea of the superiority of whites over blacks. Faulkner shows the workings of this notion specifically with two characters: Percy Grimm and Euphues Hines.

The narrator describes Percy's vision of whiteness as a "belief that the white race is superior to any and all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races and that the American uniform is superior to all men and that all that would ever be required of him in payment for this belief, this privilege, would be his own life" (Faulkner 451). This statement is quite ominous because it illustrates Percy's conflation of race, patriotism and military zeal. Jay Watson speaks similarly in that he argues that "Grimm's America is a racial republic [...] For Grimm, then, to guard the nation is to guard the white race" (83) and its defense is Grimm's utmost goal.

Indeed, his militant patriotism brings him the admiration of the town: "Without knowing that they were thinking it, the town had suddenly accepted Grimm with respect and perhaps a little awe and a deal of actual faith and confidence, as though somehow his vision and patriotism and pride in the town, the occasion had been quicker and truer than theirs" (Faulkner 456). Given the connection of the situation with race which has so far been shown as a strong organizing principle of the community, it is safe to argue that based on his patriotic zeal he becomes an insider of the community, whereas before he was perceived as a being of no consequence: "[his father] thought that the boy was just lazy and in a fair way to become perfectly worthless" (Faulkner 450). Given this tacit elevation of Percy to the position of an insider, we agree with Davis who argues that "Percy Grimm acts with community approval, or at least the force of the community behind him" (172).

However vital and appealing the notions Percy defends and his personal zeal may be to the community, the narrator does not show him in a positive light. First of all, his military carreer is commented upon: "He could now see his life opening before him, uncomplex and inescapable as a barren corridor, completely freed now of ever having to think or decide" (Faulkner 451). To rephrase this comment of the narrator, Percy is from that moment on purely devoted to the ideas he has imbibed: he does not have to reconsider them, just follow them. He thus becomes a fanatic and Alwyn Berland argues that in this sense he is linked with other fanatical characters in *Light in August* – Simon McEachern and Euphues Hines (53). Berland furthermore argues that "Grimm is a proto-fascist in a sense", but this seems to be too far fetched, given also Faulkner's personal denial of this fact: "I wrote [*Light in August*] in 1932 before I'd ever heard of Hitler's Storm Troopers" (Faulkner qtd. in Brooks 60).

The second point that shows Percy Grimm in a negative light is the contradiction between his actions and his words. He first claims that he is trying to assemble the soldiers just in order to preserve order in the community: "We must let the law take its course. The law, the nation. It is the right of no civilian to sentence a man to death. And we, the soldiers of Jefferson, are the ones to see to that" (Faulkner 451-452). Despite all these noble notions, it is Grimm who in the end murders[11] Joe. It is well possible to agree with Brooks who attributes Percy's murder to the unleashing of his subconscious sadism that is the product of his emotional starvation and loneliness in his childhood (61-62).

Another proponent of the superiority of white people is Euphues Hines and even he is not depicted in an appealing manner. Perhaps most characteristic of him is the paradox of propagating white superiority, exhibiting himself as an example of the superior race and at the same time being fed by the food brought to him by black people, since he has no other mode of sustenance:

> This white man who was very nearly dependent on the bounty and charity of negroes for sustenance was going singlehanded into remote negro churches and interrupting the service to enter the pulpit and in his harsh dead voice and at times with violent obscenity, preach to them humility before all skins lighter than theirs, preaching the superiority of the white race, himself his own exhibit A, in fanatic and unconscious paradox (Faulkner 343-344).

[11] By describing the act of killing Joe Christmas as murder and not as lynching we agree with the argumentation proposed by Brooks, who claims it to be murder on account of being committed only by one person (51-52). We agree with this interpretation even though Faulkner's depiction of the general atmosphere of the community resembles the mood of lynchings. Compare e.g. Williamson's description of the Nelse Patton lynching in Oxford, 1908: "The townspeople, in 'a frenzy of excitement,' gathered around the jail, just north and east of the town square. As night came on, 'great crowds came in from the country' until some 2,000 people had assembled" (William Faulkner and Southern History 158)

This scene is deeply troubling, because it shows that Hines' superiority has no substance in his life; he has not achieved anything that could support his vision of himself as superior to the black people, except for the color of his skin. It is also only the color of his skin that in his view legitimizes his overbearing and self-assured manner with which he behaves to the black people when he interrupts a sermon.

It is also through Euphues Hines that Faulkner shows how deeply the notions of race are imbued with religion. In the scene of his interruption of the sermon in a black church, Hines conflates race ideology and religion in that race is made into a "religion" to be preached. Furthermore, this passage parallels two other scenes: its violence resembles Joe's interruption of service in the black church and the actual 'sermon' on race echoes Hightower's conflation of religion and the past. The connection of race and religious imagery is intensified by Hines' alleged clairvoyance that is aimed specifically at "the black curse of God Almighty" (Faulkner 374) and "bitchery and abomination" (Faulkner 370) with the proud declaration that God declared Hines to be "[His] chosen instrument" (Faulkner 386) to watch the working of His design. Indeed, Hines' entire narration of the story of Joe's life from the point when he was conceived up to his adoption is told in an almost biblical manner. His religious fanaticism is reinforced in his monologues even through the third person narration that is reminiscent of Old Testament rhetoric (Bleikasten 92).

4.3.3 Constructing Joe Christmas – The Ambiguous Character

So far the discussion has been concerned with the general existence of race as a construct in the community – both with the notions that the community cherishes and with the mechanisms that are at work when these notions start to function in the community. In this part the discussion will focus on how the community constructs the

racial identity of one individual – Joe Christmas. We have already seen in chapter 4.1.2 that he lives in the community as an outsider and is from the first moment seen as ambiguous. Despite this strangeness he is accepted as a white man. In the following argumentation we would like to show how the community constructs Joe's blackness and by means of this also forces him into the position of an outcast.

Unlike the creation of an outcast, where the primary offence was the transgression of norms, as the discussion of Hightower has shown, the functioning of race is different. It requires first of all the initial statement of the fact that an individual belongs to a specific race – the original performative, i.e. "that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names"[12] (Butler qtd. in Dondlinger 103) - and the consecutive reiteration that establishes the first mention in the consciousness of the community. Dondlinger furthermore describes this process in her article "Getting around the Body: The Matter of Race and Gender in Faulkner's *Light In August*" and brings to the fore the thoughts of the feminist philosopher Judith Butler, for whom "the very materiality of the body is produced discursively through the citation and reiteration of cultural norms" (Dondlinger 98). These processes are all the more important in the case of Joe, whose appearance allows him to live in the white world, but by virtue of the power of the performative act and the meanings it activates, he is inscribed as black.

The original performative that inscribes Joe with blackness[13] comes from Doc Hines and thus takes place outside of the Jefferson community. Yet, as we have shown, Doc Hines is a religious fanatic and thus is not a reliable source of information. Yet the only source of information about Joe's blackness is Hines' clairvoyance - "Doc Hines could see in [the face of Joe's father] the black curse of

[12] For a more elaborate discussion of this concept see chapter 2.2
[13] For the discussion of racial identity as Joe lives it out see chapter 5.1.1

God Almighty" (Faulkner 374). This statement is furthermore problematized by Milly's contending statement "that [the father] was a Mexican" (Faulkner 374) and as a result the reader is left in doubt as to the race of Joe's parentage[14], same as Joe himself.

The same principle of performativity is at work when the community of Jefferson first establishes Joe's blackness. In Jefferson this act is reserved for Joe Brown/Lucas Burch: "That's right... Go on. Accuse me. Accuse the white man that is trying to help you with what he knows. Accuse the white man and let the nigger go free" (Faulkner 97). This act is fraught with similar uncertainty just like the original one not only in that it is a reiteration of information that was given Brown/Burch by Joe, but in that it is reiterated by a character that is morally dubious – a bootlegger and a man who runs away from the pregnant Lena and does not assume responsibility for his child even after it is born. Furthermore, the performative statement he pronounces in front of the sheriff is full of self-interest in that Joe/Lucas not only "plays the race card" in order to extricate himself from suspicions of his involvement in the murder of Joanna Burden, but also because of the reward her nephew set for the capture of the perpetrator. The final paradox of this performative act is that "the 'dark complected' (46) [55 our edition] Lucas Burch most likely has a darker skin than Christmas, whom he betrays as a 'nigger'" (Snead 92).

The moment when Christmas is cited as black is an incredibly important one in that it clearly demonstrates how strong a force the concept of race is in the community, since the invocation of it allows Lucas Burch/Joe Brown, a morally dubious authority indeed, to escape from being suspect of participating in the crime:

[14] With respect to the uncertainty of Joe's parentage, Judith Bryant Wittenberg mentions Regina Fadiman's study of Faulkner's revisions of Light in August. Fadiman comes to the conclusion "that Faulkner deliberately sought to mystify the racial identity of Joe Christmas" (Bryant Wittenberg, "Race in *Light in August*" 153)

"It's like he knew he had them then. Like nothing they could believe he had done would be as bad as what he could tell that somebody else had done" (Faulkner 98). However fraught with problems this entire process may be for the reader, the community accepts it only with a little hesitation on the part of the marshal: "You better be careful what you are saying, if it is a white man you are talking about" (Faulkner 98). Same as in the case of Hightower, the only voice that is able to comment on the proceeding with the accuracy of his position as an outsider is that of Byron who says the following in an attempt to persuade Hightower to sacrifice himself for Joe: "all the evidence they got against him is Brown's word, which is next to none" (Faulkner 390). Byron thus brings attention to Brown as a dubious moral authority, but above all to the fact that it is again only a word without other, more substantial evidence to back it up.

The performative act that establishes Joe Christmas as black and that is explicitly narrated, is followed by the process of reiteration. Just as in the case of Hightower's offence it constitutes the most important part of constructing Joe's racial identity in the community. This is specifically evident from the following passage:

> Through the long afternoon they clotted about the square and before the jail – the clerks, the idle, the countrymen in overalls; the talk. It went here and there about the town, dying and borning again like a wind or a fire until in the lengthening shadows the country people began to depart in wagons and dusty cars and the townspeople began to move supperward. Then the talk flared again, momentarily revived, to wives and families about supper tables in electrically lighted rooms and in remote hill cabins with kerosene lamps. And on the next day [...] they told it again: 'He dont look any more like a

nigger than I do. But it must have been the nigger blood in him' (Faulkner 348-349).

This passage reveals not only the process of reiteration; it also shows how the talking flows and ebbs in the community. It is present almost everywhere and so creates a significant link between the members of the community and reaches also the countryside.

The above quoted passage is also revealing in that it shows that all the insiders of the community not only participate in the mechanisms, but they also participate in the ideology of race and are indeed united by it: they do not question what is told with respect to Joe's blackness, even though he looks just like them. Thus Faulkner not only documents the all-pervasive role that language has in the process of constructing racial identity, but this passage shows more than any other the constructed nature of the concept of race, and undermines it by showing the discrepancy between reality and the beliefs, just as in the case of Hightower. Theresa Towner voices the same thought in saying that Faulkner refuses "to accept as "natural" anything that is not literally of the flesh" (46).

Another element that shows that the concept of race is at work in this passage is the invocation of Joe's black blood. As it was already argued, one of the crucial elements of the ideology of race was the attribution of specific behavior to genetic determinants. Jay Watson goes even further in arguing that the specific medium of this conflation was blood: "the concept of 'blood' helps to sustain and legitimate the concept of 'race' and, within that conceptual scheme blood is understood as constitutive of race" (77). When the community applies the logic of "black blood" to Joe it invokes all the norms of behavior attached to it. Yet Joe cannot be so conveniently placed in these categories and therefore he infuriates the community:

He never acted like either a nigger or a white man. That was it. That was what made the folks so mad. For him to be a murderer and all dressed up and walking the town like he dared them to touch him, when he ought to have been skulking and hiding in the woods, muddy and dirty and running. It was like he never even knew he was a murderer, let alone a nigger too (Faulkner 350).

The notion of blood is furthermore complicated by a speech delivered by Gavin Stevens, by family ties a member of the Jefferson "aristocracy", District Attorney by profession, a holder of a degree from Harvard and thus, perhaps, the most educated man in Jefferson. Stevens delivers the following speech to his friend, likewise a graduate from Harvard and a college professor:

"His blood would not be quiet, let him save it. It would not be either one or the other and let his body save itself. Because the black blood drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it. And it was the white blood which sent him to the minister, which rising in him for the last and final time, sent him against all reason and all reality, into the embrace of a chimaera, a blind faith in something read in a printed Book. Then I believe that the white blood deserted him for a moment. Just a second, a flicker, allowing the black to rise in its final moment and make him turn upon that on which he had postulated his hope of salvation" (Faulkner 449).

Unlike the rest of the community, who have constructed Joe as black only, Stevens complicates the situation by introducing also his whiteness and thus tries to construct Joe not as a "nigger" but as a tragic mulatto who is torn between his

whiteness and his blackness. Watson analyzes Gavin's speech thus: "The tragedy of Stevens' mulatto is not social, the ostracism of an individual denied membership in any human community, but somatic, a matter of the organism's own grotesque rejection of itself on the physical level" (86).

Notwithstanding all his attempts to see two forces struggling in Joe, not just reducing him to one, Stevens is locked thinking in stereotypes just as other insiders of the community, because he substitutes the stereotype of blackness with yet another stereotype – the tragic mulatto. In invoking the personality that is irresolutely split between blackness and whiteness he calls up yet another set of stereotypes of blackness as evil and whiteness as virtue. It is apparent from the passage in that the alleged black blood prompts Joe to commit deeds that are bad or stereotypically attributed to the black people, e.g. living in a negro cabin or the intention to use a gun in an act of violence, whereas his white blood is the impulse to virtue, e.g. abstaining from violence or turning to religion. In this respect it is safe to argue that Faulkner intended to show the strength of the notion of race and racial stereotypes: even the most educated people succumb to their dictate. Thus Gavin's attempt to explain Joe's behavior in a supposedly more humane and educated manner ends up in the dead end of conflating two stereotypes. Faulkner thus shows how irrevocably locked the Southerners are in their stereotypical thinking.

We saw earlier the ambiguity of Joe's existence in the community – he is an outsider at first, is later labeled as black and even as such, he behaves in an ambiguous way. The resolution should come through his trial, but he is murdered and castrated instead. Yet not even his death brings a satisfying resolution to the members of the community, because, as Deborah Clarke argues, at that moment he simply becomes a man, obliterating all racial distinctions (412) that are so important

for the life of the community: "the *man* seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever" (Faulkner 465, italics mine). Thus Joe will continue to be a troubling memory for the community, since Faulkner points out that "they are not to lose it in whatever peaceful valleys" (465).

In the scene Joe becomes simply a man despite the "pent black blood [that] seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket" (Faulkner 465). In this respect we agree with Jay Watson who argues that "Faulkner simultaneously alludes to and renounces racial metaphor in coloring Joe's blood black" (87). Watson explains this statement in the following manner:

> [t]he reader is meant to see not an authorial confirmation of Stevens' racial theories, whose discourse the passage cunningly echoes, but instead the literal and material fact of blood: the thick, dark, viscous deoxygenated fluid issuing from the massive, violently opened veins that run along the inside of the thighs and loins (87).

4.4 Constructing Race in the Community – Conclusion

To sum up the arguments of this chapter we can say that the community has great power over an individual as it has been demonstrated through the argumentation concerning the dynamic of becoming an outcast. The existence of this dynamic shows that one's position in society is quite unstable and may change according to the will of the community based on the fulfillment or offence of the norms present in it. In the context of the South, race is an element that contributes significantly to the dynamic between the center and the margin and we have shown that it was instrumental in casting out Joe and maintaining Hightower's status as an outcast. One's racial identity or Otherness is constructed through language – especially telling and retelling, and Faulkner uses this principle both structurally as well as thematically. At the same time Faulkner undermines this process because he shows the iteration and reiteration as something without substance; it is just a circulation of words regardless of their content and veracity. Yet the words have the power to change the lives of individuals, especially when the notion of race is invoked. This was demonstrated in the case of Gail Hightower and more dramatically and ambiguously so in the case of Joe Christmas.

The community constructs the actual meanings of race around stereotypical notions. These stereotypes are, on the general level, blackness as evil and whiteness as virtue. More specifically the community sees the black people through the prism of the stereotypes of the "negro beast rapist" and the tragic mulatto. These stereotypes are offset in the communal consciousness by the notion of the superiority of the white race. Yet Faulkner undermines this concept, because its two major proponents, Euphues Hines and Percy Grimm integrate the notion of white superiority with religious and patriotic fanaticism. In this respect, Faulkner shows the concept in a negative light.

In the case of Joe Christmas we once again saw the mechanism the community uses to inscribe a racial identity onto an individual. This happens through the performative act of Joe Brown/Lucas Burch that is as ridden with self-interest and lack of evidence as the original act performed by Euphues Hines is endowed with little proof and religious fanaticism. This act is strengthened by the circulation of the gossip about Joe's blackness in the community. The community cherishes only stereotypical notions about black people and their behavior and imposes them upon Joe despite his white appearance. Yet Joe continues to be ambiguous to them and this ambiguity is not resolved even through his death because Joe's death obliterates racial categories and leaves the community with the memory of himself as just a man – a human being.

5. Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden: The Individual and the Meanings of Race

So far our argumentation has been concerned with the joint communities of Jefferson and Mottstown and their conceptions of race. Even though the concepts of race of these communities are essential for the development of the several narrative strands between which Faulkner seeks to establish parallels and contrasts[15], they are not the major focus of the novel. Indeed the communities are the "invisible force" (52) of Brooks' famous study of *Light in August,* "The Community and the Pariah", also by virtue of occupying considerably less space on the actual pages of the novel than the major characters – Lena Grove, Byron Bunch, Gail Hightower, but above all Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden. It has already been shown in chapter 4 that Joe and Joanna are involved in a very troubling way in the racial discourse of the community. Therefore we would like to devote this chapter to the discussion of the ideas these characters connect with blackness and whiteness and determine to what degree their conceptions reaffirm or complicate the stereotypes and notions cherished by the community and how Faulkner comments on their struggle with race.

[15]For a discussion of the structure of the novel and its dependence on parallels and contrasts see Kreiswirth, "Plots and Counterplots: The Structure of *Light in August*"

5.1 - Joe Christmas

5.1.1 – Joe Christmas' Racial Identity

In discussing Joe's identity we act on the assumption that how one identifies determines his behavior. In trying to determine Joe's identity we are entering a road well traveled because the criticism concerned with *Light in August* has so far produced many conceptions of Joe's racial identity: to some critics Joe is black (Dondlinger 104), to some critics Joe is both black and white (Davis 135 and Ickstadt 533). Other critics argue that Joe is neither white nor black (Sundquist 67) and others complicate the issue by arguing that because Joe combines both races, he is neither black nor white with the following justification: "to have an identity; to be one; to have two identities: to be no one" (Bleikasten 83). This variety of criticism attests to the ambiguity of the text as well as to the volatility of the concept of identity[16]. Given our conception of identity as emerging from the joint operation of two processes, i.e. performativity and citationality on the one hand and the complex process of socialization on the other hand, we would like to join those critics who argue that Joe is both white and black and substantiate our point of view in the ensuing discussion.

The joint processes of performativity and citationality establish Joe's blackness. As it has already been demonstrated, the original performative of Joe's identity is pronounced by Euphues Hines – Joe's grandfather. Hines' performative is highly fraught with ambiguity that is to be ascribed to his fanatic involvement in questions of religion and race. The supposed blackness of Joe's father, from whom Joe's blackness derives by means of the operation of the one drop rule, is further supported by another ambiguous source: a circus owner who "said how the man was a part nigger instead of Mexican" (Faulkner 377). Although the sources are not

[16] For a more detailed discussion of this concept see chapter 2.2.

trustworthy, the power of the words used in the performative act and the backlog of cultural meanings accumulated in the notion of blackness that is activated by the performative are so immense that they establish Joe as black and pave the way for his own citation of blackness.

At this point it is important to note that the story of his family is not accessible to Joe because he was raised in an orphanage, without any knowledge about his family members and without ever seeking that knowledge throughout his life. Thus to him the information about his blackness, however ambiguously conveyed through the children that call him "nigger" and through the dietitian's curse, is of decisive importance, because he internalizes it despite the contradiction of his "parchmentcolored"[17] skin. Even though Joe has doubts about his own blackness that he voices first to Bobbie and more explicitly also to Joanna, it shapes his entire life with little room for change, because "individual humans do not possess quite the same productive power over their own bodies" (Dondlinger 103) as the cultural authorities. Thus the following reasoning about Joe's identity suggests itself: "While Joe Christmas does not originally produce his black identity, he reiterates this inscription and thus continually reproduces that black identity" (Dondlinger 104). Bearing this in mind we agree with the argumentation that "[Joe] clearly self-identifies as black" (Dondlinger 104).

Yet Dondlinger's argument about Joe's self-identification as black is only sustainable when we conceive of identity as constituted by performativity and citationality alone. The second substantial process of establishing an identity is socialization. Faulkner accentuates the importance of this process because he devotes chapters 6-10 to Joe's coming of age and the degree of attention Faulkner

[17] Cf. chapter 4.2.1

pays to it has been noted by Brooks who argues that "the warping of [Joe's] mind and spirit [...] is the result of the way in which he has been reared from infancy" (51). Based on these presuppositions we want to argue that Joe is socialized into the white world because he grows up in an orphanage for white children and is adopted by the white and deeply religious McEacherns and thus internalizes primarily the lifestyle of white people.

We cannot claim that Joe's socialization into the white world is a particularly unproblematic one, because as an orphan he lacks the love and acceptance of the "significant others"[18] that should guide him through the process of becoming a new member of society. The closest Joe comes to being loved at this stage of his life is through contact with the girl Alice, who is herself an orphan. Despite Joe's placement in a foster family, the stern world of Simon McEachern fails to give Joe any sense of positive connectedness because Faulkner shows Joe to be connected with McEachern not through love but through punishment. At one point when Joe expects to be beaten, it is commented upon in the following manner: "Perhaps he was thinking how he and the man could always count upon one another" (Faulkner 159). In contrast, Mrs. McEachern is at the same time described as "unpredictable" (Faulkner 159) and thus also not connected with Joe in a reaffirming manner despite her kindness as it manifests itself when she brings him food after a beating or sews buttons onto his garments.

However problematic Joe's socialization into the white world may appear, it is not insignificant that nine years elapse between his adoption by the McEacherns

[18] Berger and Luckmann use this term not in the everyday sense of the expression, but to describe the people whose world a child internalizes during the processes of primary and secondary socialization. For a theoretical discussion of the term cf. chapter 2.2.

and the first episode after that point where race is involved – Joe's encounter with the "womanshenegro" at the age of fourteen (Ruppersburgh 307-308). Nine years appears to be a sufficient amount of time to proclaim Joe as a member of the white world in which he spends most of his time, despite his problematic sense of blackness. Our argumentation proves Snead's claim that "[Joe] has not been socialized" (93) wrong. However, we agree with Snead's statement that "[Joe] does not 'know' what his 'I' signifies" (93), or, more specifically, that his "I" signifies two contradictory concepts, as our discussion of his identity has shown.

The episode with the 'womanshenegro" marks the beginning of Joe's adolescent and adult life between the two conflicting sides of his identity – he lives as a white man and yet he tells women he sleeps with and Joe Brown/Lucas Burch that he is black. However, when Joanna tries to make him study at a black college and subsequently tries to make him pray with her and expiate their sexual union, he murders her in an attempt to save his whiteness from being engulfed by his blackness[19]. Thus we see that Joe struggles to live out both his identities. In this respect we also agree with the following argumentation of Thadious Davis:

> Joe Christmas refuses to accept the terms of his existence dictated by southern society. Those terms – to be either white or black, to live as one or the other – are in themselves limiting and dehumanizing. Joe's refusal, though effectively defeated, is a positive, progressive impulse, but one doomed to failure because it cuts so sharply against the grain of traditional southern life and thought" (Davis 133).

[19] For other interpretations of the motivation of Joe's murder cf. e.g. Urgo 400 or Duvall 107.

Joe not only embodies the wish for breaking the constricting delineations, but also explicitly voices this hope when he asks Joanna "'Just when do men that have different blood in them stop hating each other'" (Faulkner 249)?

At this point we would like to ask what else besides making Joe Christmas a positive impulse in the racialized world does Faulkner achieve by creating a character with an ambiguous identity. It seems plausible to argue that Joe Christmas embodies Faulkner's polemic with the stereotype of the tragic mulatto. As we have already argued in the chapter concerned with the communal constructions of race, Gavin Stevens as the most educated member of the Jefferson community, yet equally locked in stereotypes, explains Joe's vacillation between whiteness and blackness as a matter of Joe's blood, an actual conflict of the two antagonistic liquids in Joe's body. Gavin claims that each of the two bloods gains the upper hand at intervals and thus makes Joe into the tragic mulatto as the race conceptions in the South understood the concept.

In contrast to Gavin's speculation, our argumentation has shown that Faulkner makes Joe entirely a product of cultural and societal forces and intensifies the conflict by infusing it with Joe's uncertainty about his blackness. Thus Faulkner at the same time alludes to the tragic mulatto stereotype and intertextually resonates with other works of fiction that utilize this stereotype, e.g. Robert Lee Durham's *The Call of the South*[20], and subverts the conception of the tragic mulatto as a result of "natural" forces.

[20] For an in depth discussion of American fiction that deals with the tragic mulatto stereotype see Berzon 30 ff.

5.1.2. Joe Christmas: Meanings of Blackness and Whiteness

In the previous section we have established Joe Christmas as vacillating between two sides of his racial identity. We have also previously argued that Joe is an outsider of the community, and in a clash with the rigid racial conceptions of the community that requires clear racial allegiance becomes an outcast. As a person that generally frustrates the community, it is interesting to inquire into the meanings of race he behaves by and determine both the way he lives two identities in a world of strict allegiances, but also his ideas about race that prompt his behavior which contradicts the ideas the society holds.

Before Joe enters his adult life, the reader is witness to scenes that further complicate this already problematic setup of the two conflicting parts of Joe's identity. Since a few scenes that shape Joe's life happen at a time when "[m]emory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders" (Faulkner 119), it seems plausible to say that they are not directly accessible to him as memories, but rather as impressions deposited in his subconscious. Yet these episodes mark him all the more pervasively for his entire life and feed into his sense of blackness.

One such episode paves way for his blackness in that it establishes his sense of Otherness that stems from his awareness of the fact that the janitor of the orphanage, i.e. Euphues Hines, his actual grandfather, constantly watches him:

> He knew that he was never on the playground for an instant that the man was not watching him from the chair in the furnace room door, and that the man was watching him with a profound and unflagging attention. If the child had been older he would perhaps have thought *He hates me and fears me. So much that he cannot let me out of his sight* With more vocabulary but no more age he might have thought *That is why I am different form the others:*

because he is watching me all the time He accepted it (Faulkner 138 Faulkner's italics).

Joe is therefore similar to Hightower: just like Hightower's Otherness as an outcast who did not fulfill the norms brings about his association with the Other in the racial sense, so does Joe's Otherness as a subject of the gaze of the janitor[21], i.e. his grandfather Euphues Hines, open up the same possibility of racialization. Another event that is of immense influence is the moment when Joe unwillingly becomes witness to the sexual encounter between the dietitian and the young doctor Charley at the orphanage. Hidden between her clothes, Joe unwittingly eats up a considerable amount of the dietitian's pink toothpaste and vomits. Consequently, the dietitian drags him out of his hiding place and curses him as a "little nigger bastard" (Faulkner 122). Not only is this one of the first moments when Joe is labeled as black and may start to internalize this label; it is also a moment in which many shaping elements of his life conflate: nausea, women and blackness (Berland 38). All this is enclosed by the general feeling of transgressing, doing something bad because he was not supposed to enter the room of the dietitian. Thus when he is cursed, Joe creates the link that "being bad means being a nigger" (Clarke 410). Through this experience Joe also internalizes the basic meaning of blackness in the South[22]. Together with conceiving of blackness as bad, this scene also lays the foundation of Joe's sense of women as bad. In this sense Joe's incipient attitude also mirrors the general cultural climate of the South because, in creating *Light in August,* "Faulkner described the world he knew and that world was rife with contempt for women" (Fowler "Joe Christmas and 'Womanshenegro'" 145).

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[21] Cf. Bleikasten: "With Faulkner the Father – especially the Dead Father - is always the one who names, places, marks, the one who casts the spell whether through his voice or his eyes" (87).

[22] Cf. chapter 3 and 4.

The connection of women, sex and blackness is an important one since it is duplicated and varied throughout Joe's life. He relives this connection for the first time at the age of fourteen when he and four other boys have their first sexual experience with a black prostitute Joe's raging mind labels as 'womanshenegro'. This experience is explicitly linked to Joe's encounter with the dietitian because "there was something in him trying to get out, like when he used to think of toothpaste" (Faulkner 156). Only this time what is released is not vomit, but violence, because Joe starts to kick the black woman. This release of violence comes since for the first time he perceives blackness and femininity as a threat to himself (Clarke 411) and Faulkner brings this fact to the fore by the image of something dark and liquid: "[l]eaning, he seemed to look down into a black well" (Faulkner 156). Joe perceives the possibility of plunging into the well of blackness symbolically by penetrating the woman's body on the physical level.

The scene of slighting Joe as "a nigger son of a bitch" (Faulkner 218) is later in the novel reintroduced and varied when Joe thwarts Bobbie's means of earning a living, i.e. by prostitution, and with it the business of Max and Mame by doing something "bad" - by fighting his adoptive father at a dance and attracting thus the interest of police with the imminent investigation not only of his own deed but also of their illegal activity as owners of a brothel. During this episode Joe also begins to learn that there is "something wrong" about a white woman having sex with a black man, let alone for free, because Bobbie screams "'[Me] that always treated you like a white man'" (Faulkner 217) and "'The son of a bitch! Me f.ing [sic] for nothing a nigger son of a bitch'" (Faulkner 218). Her outrage combines both the racial and the financial outrage. Consequently, Joe is beaten shortly afterward in revenge and protection of the trespassed white womanhood.

Since Joe has learned about this forbidden connection that is materialized in the "negro rapist" stereotype, he invokes it in his intimate contact with prostitutes: "He bedded with women and paid them when he had the money, and when he didn't have it he bedded anyway and then told them that he was a negro" (Faulkner 224). As Theresa Towner argues, Joe does this because "he tries to manipulate the color line to his advantage" (60) because "he will only get a beating, but assuredly a woman at no charge" (60). It seems that in this instance Joe goes against the stereotype by transgressing it.

However, Joe is in fact deeply locked in the "negro rapist" stereotype, because when at one point a woman is not outraged and accepts the fact that she has just had sex with an allegedly black man and thus does not act out the part of the white woman that is not to be associated with the black man, he beats her so violently that "[i]t took two policemen to subdue him" (Faulkner 225). As a consequence of this incident Joe goes to live with black people, "shunning white people" (Faulkner 225) of his own accord and for the first time in his life tries to embrace his blackness fully, not just cite it at various intimate moments. Yet this experiment of "trying to breathe into himself the dark odor, the dark and inscrutable thinking and being of negroes" (Faulkner 226) backfires, ending in "physical outrage and spiritual denial" (Faulkner 226) and a consequent return to the white world.

Joe feels that his existence in the white world is under an intense threat after his encounter with the race-obsessed Joanna. The threat of blackness obliterating Joe's whiteness becomes all the more intense because, as Judith Bryant Wittenberg argues, "[Joanna's] initial behavior toward Joe causes him to feel she has 'niggerized' him, for the meal she leaves him appears in his sensitive eyes to be 'set out for the nigger'" ("Race in *Light in August*" 156). Joe wildly resists such clear inscription of

race upon himself by throwing the dishes, just as he repudiated the kindness of Mrs. McEachern, who brought him food when he was a child.

Joe's "niggerization" in connection with Joanna happens in many more senses; it turns into a stereotypization. One of the examples is the way Joe enters her house when he goes to make love to her – it plays out the stereotype of the "negro" rapist despoiling white womanhood: "And when he entered the house at night it was as he had entered it that first night; he felt like a thief, a robber, even while he mounted to the bedroom where she waited. Even after a year it was as though he entered by stealth to despoil her virginity each time anew" (Faulkner 234). Obviously, Joe can read the stereotypical nature of the situation and is outraged by the inscription. On one of the occasions when he enters Joanna's house he thinks "I'll show her" (Faulkner 236), but when he rapes her, he acts according to the stereotype he is trying to defy and "the rape only makes him 'blacker' and Joanna more the white, Southern lady" (Dondlinger 107).

Even though many times Joe thinks he should "better blow" (Faulkner 236), he stays. However, things come to a head when Joanna asks him to enter a black college despite his white appearance. The threat of blackness materializes when Joe asks Joanna "'tell niggers that I am a nigger too?" (Faulkner 277). In his outrage at the threat to his own body he "degrades [Joanna's] body" (Dondlinger 109) that is no longer fertile in verbal and physical violence, concluding: "'That's all. You're just worn out. You're not any good anymore. That's all'" (Faulkner 278).

Joe feels this threat of blackness on a more symbolic level when he enters Freedmantown shortly before his murder of Joanna and this episode is highly reminiscent of the encounter with the "womanshenegro" in that it shares with it the imagery of blackness and liquid. Yet this time Joe sees himself "[a]s from the bottom

of a thick black pit" (Faulkner 114) and the feeling is once again intensified by the presence of the feminine and the evil Joe associates with it: "It was as though he and all other manshaped life about him had been returned to the lightless hot wet primogenitive Female" (Faulkner 115) so the threat is much more imminent than in the case of the "womanshenegro".

The feeling of threat Joe perceives is furthermore amplified because the "bodiless voices [are] murmuring talking laughing in a language not his" (Faulkner 114). Snead comments on this division between the races on a general level when he argues that "[p]erception seems particularly difficult between races and sexes"[23] (86). This inability to understand the language of the black people clearly shows Joe's estrangement from them and the deeply problematic nature of his relation to blackness.

Consequently Joe seeks "the cold hard air of white people" (Faulkner 115) where he feels safe because he had been socialized into the white world and has, with a brief exception, lived his life as a white man with all the privileges this position offers. In this sense the meanings Joe associates with whiteness are positive, unlike the meanings of blackness. However, since he is primarily preoccupied with blackness, it is impossible to determine what specific concepts Joe associates with whiteness.

Joe finally accepts his inscription as a black man during his flight after murdering Joanna. The acceptance is symbolized through the pair of brogans he exchanges with a black woman and feels that they leave a "mark on his ankles [that is the] gauge definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping up his legs" (Faulkner 339). After a crisis that concerns his body, especially functions such as the

necessity to sleep and eat, Joe concludes "*I am tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket of eggs*" (Faulkner 337). He also realizes that he is locked in a circle: "I have never got outside that circle. I have never broken out of the ring of what I have already done and cannot ever undo" (Faulkner 339). Dondlinger argues that this circle also contains all the racial inscriptions and that he breaks out of the circle "by walking straight into the law, by deliberately getting captured and then breaking out again" (111). As we have already argued in chapter 4.3.3, this ambiguity infuriates the community. The community is only satisfied with his behavior for a short moment at the time when Halliday captures and beats him: "the nigger [was] acting like a nigger for the first time and taking it, not saying anything; just bleeding sullen and quiet" (Faulkner 350). Such behavior is clearly reminiscent of the stereotype of the submissive Sambo and once more shows how well Joe has internalized the meanings and norms of blackness that in almost exactlythe same form exist in the community, as we have shown in chapter 4.

[23] The problem of divisions between sexes can only be hinted at in our argumentation. For a more sustained discussion see Clarke, Snead, Duvall and Fowler's article "Joe Christmas and'Womanshenegro'".

5.2 Joanna Burden – Meanings of Blackness and Whiteness

Unlike Joe Christmas, whose racial identity is fraught with ambiguity, Joanna's racial identification is not problematic. She identifies as white and this is most explicitly visible when she talks about black people in the aftermath of the speech of her father. At that point she perceives black people as "a shadow in which I lived, we lived, all white people" (Faulkner 253). By inclusion in this group, her racial alliance becomes clear. Despite her identification as white, the community assigns her the position of an outcast based on her involvement with the black people, as we have already argued in chapter 4.1.3.

It is in other respects that Joanna's identity is troubling: in criticism she is often described as "manlike" (Roberts 173) or as a woman that "seems to undercut gender differentiation, while [Joe] erases racial distinctions" (Clarke 403). Even Joe at times contemplates her gender: "'it was like I was the woman and she was the man'" (Faulkner 235). At one moment he even envisages her almost as neuter and shows thus her troublesome sexual and gender delineation: "*under the clothes she cant even be made so that it could have happened*" (Faulkner 235, Faulkner's italics). Besides her problematic gender identity, she is also "intelligent, opinionated and single" (Bryant Wittenberg, "Women" 117) and in this sense "Joanna violates every aspect of the local social code for women" (Bryant Wittenberg "Women" 117), providing thus all the more ground for ostracism.

As far as the meanings Joanna associates with race are concerned, the foundation of her beliefs was laid when she was four years old. At that point she received a sermon on race from her father, which summarizes a long familial history of concern with the black people and abolitionism that is deeply imbued with religion. The father describes the black people as "'a race doomed and cursed to be forever

and ever a part of the white race's doom and curse for its sins'" (Faulkner 252). All the more troubling is the fact that "'[n]one can escape it'" (Faulkner 252-253), and therefore not even Joanna is exempt from the curse.

This experience transforms itself in Joanna's mind into a frustrating vision of the white people bearing the black ones as a cross: "I thought of all the children coming into the world, white with the black shadow already falling upon them before they drew breath. And I seemed to see the black shadow in the shape of a cross" (Faulkner 253). This vision is appalling to her in the extreme, as her words attest: "'I cried at night. At last I told father or wanted to tell him. What I wanted to tell him was that I must escape, get away from under the shadow, or I would die" (Faulkner 253). From Joanna's urge to escape we can safely conclude that to Joanna comes to perceive blackness as something threatening and thereby also bad.

This vision of the cross is furthermore complicated by the fact that as a result Joanna "seemed to see [the black people] for the first time not as people, but as a thing" (Faulkner 253), whereas prior to the vision she viewed them as "rain, or furniture or food or sleep" (Faulkner 253), i.e. natural phenomena that are a normal part of human life. Thus she is separated from the black people as human beings. This impossibility to view the black people as a natural part of life and as human beings mirrors the way the community perceives the black people: as a stereotype, but not as individuals with an authentic motivation of their behavior[24].

Joanna's inability to see black people as human beings is all the more paradoxical because she is the offspring of abolitionists who have been taught "to hate two things [...] and those things are hell and slaveholders" (Faulkner 243). As such she should not only work for the betterment of the black people but also

[24] Cf. chapter 4.3.1.

perceive them as humans. As Brooks points out, Joanna grows up in a racist climate of the Burden family (378). This racism manifests itself once more in the speech of Joanna's father: "You must struggle, rise. But in order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you. But you can never lift it to your own level" (Faulkner 253). In this respect their thinking is similar to that of the major proponents of white supremacism, as we have described them in chapter 4.3.2 and to the Northerners that come to view her corpse after her murder and acquiesce in the stereotypes imposed on her.

Her affair with Joe shows clearly how well she has internalized the cultural meanings that are associated with blackness, because she stages the situations very often so that they would fit the stereotypes: Joe has to enter the house by climbing into a window, so that the situation would be that of a black violator forcing his way into the house and raping a white woman. Joe's blackness is inscribed upon him in that he has to enter the house by the back door and not by the front because "back doors are for blacks, 'poor white trash', and servants" (Roberts 177). We saw in chapter 5.1.2 that these inscriptions infuriate him, but his reactions to them do not defy the stereotypes but rather reinforce them.

During her affair with Joe, Joanna for some time subverts the menacing meanings of race that were imposed on her by the family. During the second phase of their relationship she becomes nymphomaniac and lives out the "sex too long repressed" (Brooks 58). She consciously accepts Joe "as irretrievably racially Other [and] calls out "Negro! Negro! Negro!" when they make love" (Bryant Wittenberg, "Race in *Light in August*" 156). This acceptance is subversive to the extreme, because through it Joanna both symbolically and physically embraces the "doom and curse" of her religion from which she was trying to escape. Moreover, it undermines the stereotype of the chastity of white women and "anatomizes the community's

central secret anxiety: the desire of a white woman for a man defined (by the community) as black" (Roberts 170). In this sense Joanna's behavior parallels that of the white prostitute who infuriates Joe in that she accepts his blackness.

Despite her nymphomaniac desire for the black man, Joanna has a sense of propriety and clear racial allegiances, that are "the central area of alliance in her South, and more important in terms of her self-awareness, [since] it is the issue that brought her family south and took the lives of her grandfather and brother" (Davis 137). The force of these notions in her is so strong that she cannot let Joe continue to "pass" as white because "a man would have to act as the land where he was born had trained him to act" (Faulkner 255). During the third phase of their relationship Joe's supposedly purposeless way of life upsets her and she asks him to enter a black college and work with a black lawyer. When she poses such unequivocal demands, it becomes clear that she does not realize how troublesome clear racial inscriptions are to Joe, who lashes out against her by slighting her aging body in return[25].

After some time of persisting in the relationship she begins to feel the threat of expiation of her sins. This becomes evident from her private "interview" with God: "'don't make me have to pray yet. Dear God, let me be damned a little longer, a little while'" (Faulkner 264). Yet Joanna's religiosity is so strong that she finally reverts to it as is apparent from the speech she delivers to Joe after sending him the second note. From this speech only the words "'[y]our soul. Expiation of'" (Faulkner 279) stand out. When she finally urges Joe to pray with her, she says "'I don't ask it. It is not I who ask it. Kneel with me.'" (Faulkner 282). This assertion resembles the fanatic statements of Doc Hines, who "knows" the will of God and here Joanna is acting as a

[25] Cf. chapter 5.1.2.

similar instrument of God's will. Her fanaticism reaches its peak in her attempt to kill Joe and, in the act of annihilation, enforce her and God's will upon him.

5.3 The Individual and the Meanings of Race - Conclusion

To sum up our argumentation, we first saw that Joe identifies as both black and white: he cites his blackness but at the same time he was socialized into the white world. In connection with Joe's identity we also argued that by showing its clear cultural foundation, Faulkner subverts the stereotype of the tragic mulatto as a conflict of two bloods in one body as proposed by Gavin Stevens. Faulkner also makes Joe's existence an impulse towards the possibility of uniting the two heritages in the future. Yet this possibility tragically backfires in the present situation in a clash with the rigid racial categories cherished by the community.

We furthermore saw that Joe internalizes throughout his life the following meanings of race: Otherness and blackness as bad. Faulkner complicates these meanings in Joe's case in a highly complex manner by connecting them with sex, femininity and nausea. Joe also internalizes the stereotypes such as Sambo and the "negro beast rapist". In this sense it is possible to argue that Joe "knows all too well how the contending races expect the members of each to think, feel and behave" (Towner 60) and thus he shares the stereotypical notions of race with the community. Even though he at times acts according to these stereotypes, he wildly resists when the stereotypes are imposed on him by others, especially by Joanna. Yet he is equally enraged when others do not act in a stereotypical manner. In connection with the meanings and the stereotypes he internalizes, he begins to perceive blackness as a threat. This threat becomes rampant through Joanna's demand that he publicly declare himself as black and thus obliterate his whiteness. The anxieties and pressures of Joe's identity and the notions of race are not resolved by erasing the menacing presence of Joanna. Joe at least tries to break out of the inscriptions

imposed upon him but by doing so he infuriates the community. Yet his death is not an easy resolution for the community, since Faulkner makes it into a memento of Joe's humanity.

Joanna's conception of race also comprises the stereotypes such as the "negro beast rapist". Yet the more troubling part of her involvement with race is her religiosity that is bequeathed to her by her father. These religious views supply her with a concept of the black people as a cross, i.e. a thing, which is equally simplifying as any stereotype. Moreover, her religiosity is the basis of her racism. Her strong sense of proper behavior and her ingrained religiosity ultimately lead to her return to the familial values after a brief period of sexual awakening that is intensified by the sense of crossing the color line and reversing the values bequeathed to her by the family. All this brings about the dramatic end of her relationship with Joe Christmas, who resists her inscriptions that in the end prove impossible to endure and Joanna as their cause and source has to be annihilated.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this thesis we would like to add a few final notes on the aims of our investigation of Faulkner's *Light in August* and the theme of race we have delineated in our introduction. It was our aim to view the notions of race as they are present in Faulkner's *Light in August* in the context of thinking about race in sociological and cultural terms. In this regard our thesis takes up especially Thadious Davis' considerations of race and Cleanth Brooks' concern with the community that was revised by Andre Bleikasten.

In the chapter concerned with sociological theory we argued that race is a sociocultural construct and therefore it is dependent on language to give it substance. Furthermore, it is dependent on the consensus about its functioning within a society and its last characteristic is its existence in time, both in the synchronic and diachronic sense. At various points of our argumentation we saw that all these characteristics appear in *Light in August*: there is unanimous consensus about race in Jefferson that manifests itself for example when everybody accepts Joe Brown/Lucas Burch's performative of Joe Christmas' blackness. The same situation also illustrates that language gives substance to the concept of race. Faulkner does not directly show how the concept of race emerges throughout time, as we have shown it to have been constructed throughout the centuries with the forming lessons of emerging 18th century science and the pressures of slavery. The 19th century saw the solidification of racial notions into the stereotypes of Sambo as a submissive child and its dark side as a bestial and lusty being that gave rise to another stereotype of the "negro beast rapist" that lusts after white women. Among others there was also the stereotype of the tragic mulatto as a being that is torn between the white blood and the black blood that are united in one body. Unlike the development of the notion

of race throughout the centuries these stereotypical images that result from it do find their place in *Light in August.*

Yet all that we have outlined above only shows that different aspects of the notion of race as described by sociological thought are present in Faulkner's work. However, by paying attention only to these facts we would reduce Faulkner's work to fiction-coated sociology and the complexity of his vision would remain uncomprehended.

Faulkner's concept of race can be seen in great complexity when probed in the context of the community of Jefferson. Here race proves to be a powerful structuring element in the community and the merest hint of the association of the white people with the black people may make one into an outcast as is true in the case of Joanna Burden.

The sexual contact with black people across the color line may be just a piece of gossip circulated in the community, but even as a piece of information without substantial proof it is still capable of maintaining the status of a character as an outcast. As a result, such characters become the Other, just as we argued in the case of Gail Hightower. Faulkner thus shows the power of language to shape the lives of the community members regardless of the veracity of the meanings it carries; its power is based on the telling and retelling. Through Byron Bunch Faulkner comments on this telling and retelling and shows it to be almost a ritual where performing the roles correctly matters more than the content.

The pervasive role of language and its power to construct human identity becomes more dramatic in the case of Joe Christmas in that he is inscribed as black despite his parchment-colored skin and his previous "passing" in the white world. Once again, the information spreads through telling and retelling and the veracity is

not questioned, even though there is a distinct possibility that Joe Brown/Lucas Burch used Joe Christmas' blackness in order to escape suspicions of murder.

The community also constructs race around stereotypical notions – upon seeing the dead body of Joanna Burden, the members readily consent without further investigation that the perpetrator must have been a "negro beast rapist" without considering the personality or individual motives of the murderer. Faulkner once again sets the situation as a ritual from the times when people inhabited caves and thus shows the community in a negative light as a primitive crowd.

The overbearing behavior of the members of the community to the black people, which also manifests itself in the above mentioned scene, is based on the conception of white superiority shared by the insiders of the community. Yet Faulkner does not present it as an appealing notion, since its two major proponents in the novel – Percy Grimm and Euphues Hines - show it to be fraught with patriotic or religious fanaticism respectively.

Faulkner also mercilessly shows Gavin Stevens, an educated man, to be hopelessly locked in the same stereotypical pattern of thinking as the rest of the community. He proposes a theory of Joe Christmas' behavior as a tragic mulatto torn by the black and white blood at war in his body. Faulkner counters this theory through Joe's identity. Joe identifies as both black and white as a result of cultural forces: Joe is socialized into the white world and most of the time "passes" as white. At the same time he was inscribed as black through the performative act of Doc Hines and he cites his blackness at various occasions, thereby showing that he also identifies as black.

The community cannot condone Joe's ambiguous identity which becomes a worse crime to the Jeffersonians than the murder of Joanna. Thus Joe is murdered

for his ambiguous behavior that fits neither the image of a black man nor that of a white man. Yet we have shown that he becomes a haunting image to the collective memory of the community, since at the moment of his death he becomes a man, a human being. He thereby obliterates the rigid racial categories as we saw them to be at work in the community.

Throughout his life Joe Christmas internalizes different meanings of blackness. These are the more general ideas of Otherness and blackness as bad. Faulkner complicates these meanings in Joe's case in a highly complex manner by connecting them with sex, femininity and nausea. Joe also internalizes the stereotypes such as Sambo and the "negro beast rapist", the same notions that the community holds. Even though he at times acts according to these stereotypes, he fights the imposition of these stereotypes on himself by others, especially by Joanna. At the same time he is enraged when others do not act in accordance with the stereotypical ways he expects from them. Joe at last tries to break out of the inscriptions imposed upon him, but in a clash with the rigid racial beliefs of the community and its power it is an attempt that of necessity fails.

Joanna's conception of race is strongly shaped by the views of her father that combine religion and race in a racist vision of the black people as inferior. As a result of this traumatic vision she starts seeing the black people as a cross, i.e. a thing, and such an approach is equally simplifying as any stereotype. She has not only internalized the ideas of blackness such as Otherness and blackness as bad but also the stereotypes such as the "negro beast rapist" that echo the notions prevalent in the community, just as Joe's ideas of race do. For a short time Joanna embraces Joe's supposed blackness, but she finally reverts to her religious views and tries to

force Joe first to openly acknowledge his blackness and expiate his sins. When Joe resists, she attempts to kill him.

These final notes have also shown that the conceptions of race are the same for the community as well as for Joanna and Joe as marginalized characters. Thus we would like to conclude our considerations of race in the community and in the individual lives of the two major characters in Light in August together with Bleikasten:

> In *Light in August*, as in most of Faulkner's novels, the individual and the community are inextricably entangled. Like all great novelists, Faulkner was well aware that individuality and society were always locked in a relationship of reciprocity: no one, not even the outsider [and outcast] is outside the jurisdiction of society; we are all within society, for no sooner are we born than society is within us and starts to pattern our lives (82).

The strength of Faulkner's work lies in the fact that he was not only aware of the relationship of the community and the individual, he also dared to probe it in the highly explosive context of race in the American South and show the tensions race creates between community and individual. We see our contribution to the discourse on Faulkner's *Light in August* in showing the complexity of factors that feed into these tensions, such as language, stereotypes and other racial notions such as superiority and inferiority, and religion. Yet all these factors do not cover the entire range of aspects that could be brought into play here. The complexity of Faulkner's concept of race could be further complicated by bringing in the concepts of power and class and playing out fully the connection of race and gender we have only hinted at when discussing Joe Christmas' conception of race.

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Résumé

Jedním z ústředních témat díla jižanského spisovatele Williama Faulknera (1897-1962) je rasa. Toto téma Faulkner rozvíjel a varioval v průběhu celé své spisovatelské kariéry, a proto je toto téma jako celek velmi obsažné. Záměrem této diplomové práce bylo postihnout pouze výsek z tohoto kontinua – fungování rasy jako konstruktu v komunitách Jefferson a Mottstown Faulknerova imaginárního kraje Yoknapatawpha tak, jak jsou tyto komunity zobrazeny ve Faulknerově románu *Srpnové světlo* (*Light in August*). Zároveň chceme popsat významy, které s rasou spojují dvě hlavní postavy románu – Joe Christmas a Joanna Burden. Jelikož současná faulknerovská studia volají po studiu spisovatelova díla v kontextu, rozhodli jsme se román Srpnové světlo analyzovat na základě sociologického přemýšlení o rase jako sociokulturním konstruktu a v kontextu vývoje chápání pojmu rasy. Naše zkoumání bude proto založeno na podrobné analýze textu s využitím sociologických a sociokulturních poznatků o rase.

Pozornost první kapitoly se v souladu s výše vymezeným tématem zaměřuje na definici rasy ze sociologického hlediska. Rasa je v tomto oboru pojímána jako sociokulturní konstrukt, tedy skutečnost vykonstruovaná lidskou společností na podkladu specifických fyziologických znaků, jako je např. barva pleti. Existence sociokulturních konstruktů jako je rasa nebo gender ve společnosti má tři nejdůležitější charakteristiky: závislost na jazyku jako médiu, konsensus o existenci konstruktu a jeho existence v čase. Tato existence v čase je postřehnutelná jak ze synchronního, tak z diachronního hlediska. Zároveň zjišťujeme, že idea rasy v lidských společenstvích často existuje ve formě stereotypů. Další oddíl kapitoly postihuje sociologický termín komunita. Zde dospíváme k názoru, že komunita je vymezena jednak jako místo a jednak jako lidské společenství, které sdílí společnou

identitu a společenské normy a na základě jejich plnění či neplnění pak přijímá či odvrhuje své členy. V kontextu těchto sociologických definicí rovněž definujeme pojem identity, který pojímáme jako koncept, jenž vzniká souhrou citační performativity a socializace.

Druhá kapitola rozšiřuje naše poznatky o rase jako konstruktu. Zde se zabýváme konkrétními významy, které byly v evropském a později v americkém kulturním prostředí přisouzeny fyziologickým odlišnostem. Jako formující faktory se projevily náboženské interpretace lidské odlišnosti, počáteční poznatky formujících se vědeckých disciplín jako biologie a antropologie či setkání s odlišnými kulturami, které byly pojímány jako barbarské (např. Irové z pohledu kolonizujících Britů). V Novém světě pak byly tyto veskrze negativní obrazy umocněny otroctvím a abolicionistickými snahami, které paradoxně přispěly k formování stereotypních představ Afro-Američanů kolem poloviny 19 století a neustálému vzdalování obou skupin tohoto světa rozděleného na dvě rasy. V této době byli černí lidé vnímáni především jako Sambo, tedy jako submisivní děti, které ale měly i odvrácenou tvář bestiálních stvoření hnaných chtíčem. Z tohoto druhého pohledu se později vyvinul stereotyp „brutálního černého samce" („negro beast rapist")[26], který touží znásilňovat bílé ženy. Další důležitý stereotyp je „tragický mulat", který je neustále rozerván mezi bílou a černou krví, které se mísí v jeho těle.

Třetí kapitola se věnuje literární analýze fungování a významů rasy v rámci komunity. Zde zjišťujeme, že rasa má významný vliv na postavení postav v komunitě, tj. zda jsou pojímány jako postavy patřící k majoritě (insiders) nebo naopak outsideři stojící na okraji komunity (outsiders) či dokonce vyhnanci (outcasts). Např. o pastoru Gailu Hightowerovi se rozšíří pomluva, že má vztahy s černými lidmi, a i tato

[26] Český překlad termínu přejímáme ze studie Tomáše Pospíšila, viz kapitola 7.

informace nijak nepodložená důkazy potvrzuje jeho pozici vyhnance, kterou mu komunita přisoudila na základě jeho neschopnosti vykonávat povolání pastora podle norem komunity. Na osudu této postavy je vidět role jazyka v komunitě, která je založena na vytváření a následovném opakování informací, jejichž pravdivost není rozhodující, tj. konstruování. Faulkner tento přístup odsuzuje skrze postavu Byrona Bunche a ukazuje, že pro komunitu je tento koloběh informací jistým rituálem, ve kterém každý musí především dobře zahrát svou roli, nikoli zprostředkovat pravdivý obsah.

Stejný koloběh informací bez důkazů se rozbíhá v případě Joa Christmase, kterého Lucas Burch označí za černého i přesto, že jako důkaz má pouze doznání samotného Christmase, který ve většině případů vystupuje jako bílý. Joe je zavražděn pro svou nejednoznačnou rasovou příslušnost ve světě, kde je jasná rasová identifikace základním životním předpokladem. Jeho smrt je však pro komunitu varovným mementem, protože Faulkner naznačuje, že Joe Christmas právě v tomto okamžiku překonává striktní rasové kategorie a stává se především lidskou bytostí.

Komunita sdílí různé významy rasy, především pak stereotyp brutálního černého samce („negro beast rapist"). Tento stereotyp je bezmyšlenkovitě aplikován, když je nalezeno tělo zavražděné Joanny Burden. Komunita vnímá pouze fakt, že oběť je bílá žena, a proto pachatelem musí být černý muž, nezvažuje již individuální motivaci pachatele nebo důkazy. Faulkner tuto scénu popisuje jako rituál jeskynních lidí, a kritizuje tak komunitu jako primitivní dav. Dalším stereotypem černých lidí vyskytujícím se ve komunitě je tragický mulat. Gavin Stevens, vzdělaný právník, se snaží vysvětlit rasově nejednoznačné chování Joa Christmase jako svár bílé a černé krve a prokazuje tak, že je navzdory svému vzdělání stejnou obětí stereotypního

uvažování jako většina komunity. Zde zároveň dospíváme k závěru, že Faulkner používá ve svém díle stereotypy, které historicky existovaly na americkém Jihu, ale především způsob, kterým tyto koncepty ztvárňuje a zpochybňuje, z něj činí skutečně významného spisovatele.

Faulkner rasu nepojímá jen ve vztahu k černým lidem. Hlavní význam bílé rasy spočívá v nadřazenosti černé rase, kterou sdílí majorita. Faulkner však na postavách Percyho Grimma a Doca Hinese ukazuje, že tato představa majority je spjata s náboženským fanatismem a slepým vlastenectvím, a proto nemůže být brána jako pozitivní hodnota.

Ve čtvrté kapitole zaměřujeme svou pozornost na dvě hlavní postavy – Joa Christmase a Joannu Burden - a na významy, které tyto postavy spojují s rasou. V případě Joa Christmase se věnujeme nejprve často zkoumané otázce rasové identity. Na základě naší definice identity uvedené v kapitole 1 dospíváme k názoru, že Joe Christmas se identifikuje jako bílý, protože byl socializován do světa bílých a následně i žije jako bílý. Zároveň se identifikuje i jako černý, protože často cituje performativ proslovený Docem Hinesem, který ustanovil jeho identitu černého člověka. Faulkner tak ukazuje, že dvojitá identita Joe Christmase je výsledkem dvou procesů závislých na kultuře, nikoli svárem dvou krví v jednom těle, jak tuto problematiku uchopil Gavin Stevens. V tomto smyslu Faulkner rovněž zpochybňuje stereotyp tragického mulata.

Joe Christmas spojuje s černou rasou stejné významy jako komunita: jinakost (Otherness) a celkovou špatnost černé rasy. Faulkner tyto významy ovšem v Joeově případě problematizuje propojením se sexem, nevolností a ženstvím. Stejně tak Joe v průběhu svého života vnitřně přijal stereotypy jako je Sambo nebo „brutální černý samec“ (negro beast rapist). Joe se v několika situacích chová podle těchto

stereotypů, ale vzdoruje situacím, kdy jej ostatní vnímají takovým stereotypním způsobem. Přitom sám vyžaduje stereotypní reakce od postav, se kterými se setkává. Joe Christmas nakonec zjišťuje, že celý život žil v zajetí koncepcí rasy a snaží se z nich vymanit. Jeho pokus však naráží na silnou zakořeněnost rasových kategorií v komunitě a končí tragicky.

Rasová identita Joanny Burden ve srovnání s dilematy Joa Christmase není problematická, protože Joanna se jasně identifikuje jako bílá. Mnohem problematičtější je pro ni propojení rasy a náboženství, které jí bylo zprostředkováno otcem. Ačkoli byl Joannin otec abolicionistou, jeho vidění černých lidí je stejně rasistické jako vidění majoritní komunity. Pod jeho vlivem Joanna začíná černé lidi vnímat jako kříž, který musí nést, a nikoli jako lidské bytosti. V tomto ohledu je její vnímání obdobně zjednodušující jako stereotypy jako „brutální černý samec" (negro beast rapist) a významy rasy jako jinakost (Otherness) a špatnost, které sdílí s majoritní komunitou. Joanna sdílí s majoritou významy rasy i přesto, že díky abolicionistické minulosti své rodiny byla komunitou postavena do pozice vyhnance. Všechny tyto významy se rovněž projevují v jejím vztahu s Joe Christmasem. Joanna se mu nejprve oddává i přes hrozbu zatracení, kterou pro ni černí lidé symbolizují. Nakonec se však tento hřích snaží odčinit. Pokouší se přimět i Joa, aby svůj hřích odčinil, ale on odmítá, a tak se jej Joanna rozhodne zabít.

Přínos této práce k faulknerovskému bádání vidíme především v tom, že jsme ukázali napětí, které ve Faulknerově románu *Srpnové světlo* koncept rasy vytváří mezi jedincem a komunitou. Ukázali jsme rovněž, že toto napětí je tvořeno mnoha faktory jako je jazyk nebo rasové stereotypy, idea nadřazenosti a náboženství. Tento výčet by v dalších studiích na toto téma bylo možné rozšířit ještě o takové aspekty jako je moc nebo třída. Další možnost rozšíření skýtá bližší zkoumání propojení rasy

a genderu. Již jen tento výčet ukazuje, že Faulknerovo ztvárnění tématu rasy jde daleko za základní sociologické definice a ukazuje jeho hluboké porozumění a lidské vnímání tohoto problému v kontextu amerického Jihu.