

1976

# Joe Christmas: A Hero in Conflict in Faulkner's Light in August

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## Recommended Citation

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JOE CHRISTMAS: A HERO IN CONFLICT IN FAULKNER'S

LIGHT IN AUGUST

(TITLE)

BY

Carole Booker Winkleblack  
➤

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1976  
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

At first glance Light in August appears the most straightforward and least complex of Faulkner's major novels. It is written in a more or less traditional advance narrative style; there is none of the distortion of time and confusing shifts of voice one normally associates with Faulkner. Although there are flashbacks and shifts in action and point of view, they never come between the reader and his understanding of what is happening in the novel. Unlike The Sound and the Fury or Absalom! Absalom!, the novel's plot and sequence of events are immediately discernable. Light in August is also unlike other of Faulkner's works in that in order to comprehend it the reader need not struggle with the dates of events, genealogy, or the familial relationship of character to character. Light in August does not figure into Faulkner's ongoing saga of Yoknapatawpha County. Although much of its action takes place in familiar Jefferson, none of its important characters are associated with the families about which Faulkner usually writes. In novels like The Bear or those of the Snopes trilogy, the reader must sometimes go outside the novel proper to gather meaningful information concerning a character's history or his relationship to the community. In Light in August, however, all the material necessary for an understanding of the novel is contained within the book itself. It remains independent of Faulkner's other works.

Light in August, then, as one begins reading it, does not seem particularly complex. Three main characters are introduced and their life histories given. A sequence of events is logically developed and,

although the novel's action is broken in upon by flashbacks and soliloquy, the reader follows it easily. He is never left puzzled concerning at just what point in time which action happened to what character. Neither does he need to recount the Sutpen or Compson genealogy in order to determine the significance of a particular action or event. But, if the reader is, at first, deceived by the apparently straightforward style and structure of Light in August, he soon discovers it is, at best, a surface simplicity. For even though the reader can rather easily grasp the various parts of the novel, he finds it difficult to assimilate these parts into a meaningful whole. In many of Faulkner's other works, notably The Sound and the Fury, the reader's difficulty arises from Faulkner's unique narrative technique. Once the sequence of events and points of view are determined, the work becomes fairly clear. Light in August, however, derives its complexity from another source. Unlike other of the major novels, it is not the story of one man or even one family; Faulkner, instead, relates the life histories of half a dozen individuals in the space of this one novel, and the reader finds himself wondering about their significance to each other and to the novel as a whole. More importantly, the novel's action is divided among three independent and seemingly unrelated major characters who are only haphazardly connected by an accident of time and place. There is the story of Lena Grove who, in the search for the father of her child, finds instead Byron Bunch, a willing substitute; the story of Joe Christmas and his thirty-three-year-long flight culminating in castration and death; and the story of Gale Hightower who, obsessed by the past, lives a kind of death-in-life existence. Light in August is comprised not of one but of three distinct stories, and herein lies

much of the novel's fascination and its complexity. Light in August becomes, in the words of Cleanth Brooks,

not a novel to be read and enjoyed but a puzzle to be solved, and in view of the number of curious bits and pieces to be fitted into some hypothetical general pattern, a frustratingly complicated puzzle . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Faulkner's insistence that the reader somehow forge his own meaning from the material of the novel has precipitated a bewildering number of different and convincingly documented critical interpretations. One group of critics insists that, much like A Fable, Light in August is actually an updated version of the Christ myth; another group claims it was meant as a vehicle to convey the horrors of racism and miscegenation; and still another would have it a portrayal of the devastating effects of Protestantism on Southern idealism. Irving Howe, and to a lesser extent Olga Vickery, sees "the split between social role and private being"<sup>2</sup> as the major concern of the novel. John L. Longley views Light in August as a modern tragedy with Joe Christmas, a "modern tragic protagonist,"<sup>3</sup> akin to classically tragic heroes like Oedipus and Macbeth. Cleanth Brooks, however, in his essay "The Community and the Pariah" dismisses the notion that it is a tragedy at all; he calls it a pastoral and "the pastoral, on the whole, aligns itself with comedy, not with tragedy."<sup>4</sup> Brooks sees the novel's major characters as social outcasts who are pitted against society. Hightower and Christmas, in contrast to Lena, "are in tension with nature . . . deformed and perverted in a struggle against it."<sup>5</sup> Alfred Kazin sees Light in August as the story of modern man caught up in an existential dilemma--the dilemma of knowing oneself. Joe Christmas is a kind of invisible



man "who is trying to become someone."<sup>6</sup> Failing to force a human identity from society, he finally, near the end of the book, seizes an identity for himself; he becomes Joe Christmas, man, instead of Negro, poor white, or orphan--the abstractions earlier assigned to him. "He stops running from his persuers and waits for them, and attains in the first moment of selfhood the martyrdom that ends it."<sup>7</sup> R.G. Collins, in his exhaustive essay "Light in August: Faulkner's Stained-Glass Triptych," rejects Kazin's theory that Christmas is an abstraction and the man who is forever acted upon but never acts until the last few pages of his story. Collins feels that Christmas is not so much concerned with forcing an identity from society as with fusing the two identities he already has. To Collins Joe Christmas, painfully aware of both his white and negro blood, "combines within himself the fundamental racial conflict to the South."<sup>8</sup> Christmas is a divided man; "he is the Ku Klux Klan of his dark self; the white as Negro hating his Negro identity at the same time that he hates the white race because he is excluded from it."<sup>9</sup> Collins believes that Joe, who for most of the novel has the consciousness of a poor Southern white, aligns Negro with animality and sexual promiscuity and perversion; because he believes himself tainted by negro blood, he sees himself and all of life as necessarily corrupt. Finally, to expurgate his guilt and outrage at his own corruption, he accepts his negro blood and allows himself to be crucified. Unlike Kazin, R.G. Collins believes that Joe's ritual crucifixion serves as a redemptive and cleansing force not only for himself but for all of society.

The wealth of different, often directly opposite, critical interpretations outlined briefly above is a tribute to the richness and

expansiveness of Faulkner's Light in August. But it is just this expansiveness that has prompted considerable debate among Faulkner critics over the question of unity. Most early critics of Light in August and even those "so generally sympathetic as Conrad Aiken and George Marion O'Donnell find the novel a failure because of lack of unity."<sup>10</sup> Irving Howe, while praising the brilliantly executed scenes in the novel, claims that "Light in August suffers a certain structural incoherence" and that "Faulkner's clumsiness in transitional stitching and narrative preparation . . . reduces the book to a series of brilliant tableaux."<sup>11</sup> Richard Adams concedes that "critics have had a great deal of trouble in efforts to demonstrate any general unity in Light in August and have sometimes concluded that it is an inferior book."<sup>12</sup> "The difficulty," states Cleanth Brooks,

has never been that such individual segments of the narration lacked vividness and power. The difficulty has always come with the attempt to relate the various episodes so as to show a coherent pattern of meaning.<sup>13</sup>

By insisting upon a rigid interpretation of Light in August, many critics have prompted the charge of disunity. The novel resists all attempts to force out some traditional structure or specific meaning; there is always some idea, some action or symbol that will not figure in as a piece of the puzzle. If we regard Light in August an indictment of racism or Calvinism, what are we to do with the story of Lena Grove? If we see the dialectic presented by Lena Grove, who is at one with nature, and Joe Christmas, who struggles against it, as the novel's central concern, how does the story of Gale Hightower figure in? If we are to accept Christmas as a modern Christ, why are we urged to see him



as cold and violent, decidedly more like Faustus than Christ? The novel cannot even be defined as a tragedy or a comedy; it contains elements of both. Light in August cannot be made to conform wholly to any literary type or

one prominent theme or symbol--acceptance or rejection of the values of the community, the alienation of Man, the burden of Calvinism, the Christian symbolism, Man's relationship with nature--in an effort to bring to the surface some hidden structural design which would give the novel unity.<sup>14</sup>

One must, instead, choose a broader idea around which to organize the substance of the novel and look elsewhere for evidence of its unity.

Francois Pitavy argues that the unique, if peculiar, structure of Light in August is the key to its unity. He urges us to put aside traditional notions of form and to look closely at Faulkner's concept and intentions. According to Pitavy, Faulkner has created in Light in August "a parable of the human condition,"<sup>15</sup> and each of its three stories is a variation on this broad theme. Lena Grove, Gale Hightower, and Joe Christmas deal with the world and their own humanity in different, often opposite, ways: Christmas resists both society's and his own limitations; Lena, in unconscious obedience to natural laws, is one of those Faulknerian characters who endure; and Hightower, by clinging to a heroic fantasy, attempts to flee a world he sees as sordid and hateful. Pitavy insists that Faulkner deliberately separates the three plots and that by alternating between them, he not only creates suspense but achieves a "balance between the plots and their opposed sets of values."<sup>16</sup> This juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory plots, a technique Pitavy claims results in a contrapuntal structure, allows Faulkner to explore

simultaneously both "man's doomed rebellion against himself and the whole of mankind"<sup>17</sup> and the persistence and endurance of man. It is a technique and a theme not limited to Light in August. The original edition of The Wild Palms, comprised of alternating chapters of The Old Man as well as The Wild Palms, displays a similar theme and an exaggeration of the same contrapuntal form employed in Light in August. When questioned about the unusual structure of The Wild Palms, Faulkner is said to have responded that

to tell the story I wanted to tell . . . I had to discover counterpoint for it, so I invented the other story, its complete antithesis, to use as counterpoint . . . as a musician would do to compose a piece of music in which he needed a balance . . . .<sup>18</sup>

Walter Slatoff, in his provocative study of Faulkner entitled Quest for Failure, takes a position similar to that of Francois Pitavy, but Slatoff bases his conclusions on a thorough and convincingly documented analysis of Faulkner's temperament and life view. He argues that Faulkner tends to see life and experience "as composed essentially of warring entities . . . in a state of conflict which can neither be ended or resolved."<sup>19</sup> In addition, Slatoff maintains that Faulkner exhibits extreme ambivalence "with respect to . . . the question of whether life and art have any point or meaning."<sup>20</sup> We cannot expect Faulkner to offer us a novel unified in any traditional way, for it is a distinctly polar and ambivalent imagination that informs Faulkner's works, and the world presented in his novels necessarily reflects his own particular temperament and life view. Slatoff maintains that it is the tension between opposites, between meaninglessness and meaning,

chaos and order, that lends Faulkner's work a definite, if peculiar, unity.

In Light in August, perhaps more than in any other novel, Faulkner achieves a balance between conflicting themes, characters, and conclusions. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that Joe Christmas, more perfectly than any of Faulkner's creations, acts as metaphor for Faulkner's conviction that life is "an accumulation of antitheses . . . each against each and all against all."<sup>21</sup> It is only when we resist the temptation to impose an arbitrary order or rigid thematic structure on Light in August and refuse to pigeonhole its characters that we can grasp the plight of its central character, Joe Christmas. Joe embodies the irresolvable dilemma the world presents; he is the focal point around which all the stories contained in Light in August revolve. Joe's problem is not, as some critics have claimed, that he is mulatto; nor is it as simple as choosing to be a black or a white man. It is that he is doomed to reconcile an irreconcilable conflict: "the white and black bloods run separately in his veins."<sup>22</sup>

A careful and unbiased look at Light in August reveals the scope and complexity of Joe's conflict. The reader is first introduced to Christmas in Chapter two through the eyes of Byron Bunch. He is marked immediately as unfathomable, a perpetual "stranger in his soiled city clothes, with his dark, insufferable face and his whole air of cold and quiet contempt."<sup>23</sup> He will have nothing to do with the men who work with him at the mill; he rejects Byron's offer of food with disdain. In Chapter four, we learn that Christmas has savagely murdered Joanna Burden, another "stranger," and that he is believed to be part

negro. In Chapter five we see him directly through the eyes of the novelist at last on what we know to be the night before the murder. In the space of a few pages, it is made obvious that Christmas is caught up in some kind of inner struggle, and that he is keenly aware that he "is going to do something" (p.97)--what and to whom we already know. As if to flee from or reconcile himself to that "something," he wanders through the streets of Jefferson. When he finds himself in the midst of Freedman Town, the negro community, Christmas becomes oddly alarmed. He runs from the "thick black pit" (p.107) of the "fecund mellow voices of negro women" (p.107) back to the white community. There he is calmed by the "cold hard air of white people" (p.107) and begins the walk back to the Burden place. Once again he comes into contact with negroes and confronts them, razor in hand, not with fear but disgust. "'Bitches!'" he said, quite loud. 'Sons of bitches!'" (p.110) After reaching the Burden house, he waits, as if in accordance with some already formulated plan, until the town clock strikes twelve to enter it. Here the chapter's action abruptly ends. Several rather disturbing questions are raised in this chapter. Why does Christmas need so urgently to "do something" to Joanna Burden, who, we have learned, is his mistress? How is this need connected to her attempts to pray over him? Why the sudden reference to Christmas' striking off the button on his underwear because it reminds him of buttons sewn on by women in the past? To make what point does Faulkner carefully contrast Christmas' reaction toward the black community and the white one, going so far as to internalize that contrast with the description of Joe's "steady white shirt and pacing dark legs"? (p.108) Why does Christmas feel such obvious hatred of negroes when he is part negro himself?



The reader is made carefully aware of these and other questions, and he begins looking for the answers in the extensive flashback of Christmas' life which comprises the next seven chapters of Light in August. It is in these chapters, foretold by the enigmatic opening lines of Chapter six, that the basis of Christmas' conflict is disclosed. The toothpaste episode serves as the first vehicle for this disclosure. It functions in two ways. First, it links in both the reader's and Christmas' minds Joe's physical revulsion at "the rife, pinkwomansmelling" (p.114) toothpaste with his attitude towards women in general. Joe, we are told, perceives of the dietician as pink and white, with hair that "made him think of candy." (p.114) He associates her with her toothpaste which is also pink and candylike.. It is only logical to equate his revulsion at the toothpaste with revulsion at the woman with whom he associates it. Secondly, the toothpaste episode serves to link Joe's guilt that he was found vomitting in the dietician's closet with the fact that he is a negro. "You little rat," she tells him when she discovers him, "You little nigger bastard!" (p.114) In the days that follow, Joe deliberately places himself in her way so that he can receive his punishment and expurgate his guilt. But instead of punishment, she offers him a dollar. Dumfounded, unable to understand why she will not punish and then release him, he hesitates. Again she pronounces his sentence: "Tell, then! You little nigger bastard!" (p.117) It is the dietician, then, who links Joe's "sinful" act with the fact that he is part negro. Joe, aware from the beginning of the watchful eyes of Hines, already knows that he is different from the other children. The dietician gives this difference a name.



The next segment of Joe Christmas' life involves his stay with the McEacherns. The question of Joe's negro blood is not directly emphasized here, but neither is it forgotten. When McEachern dismisses the name "Christmas," which we already associate with Joe's black blood ("Did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas"(p.29)) as "heathenish . . . . sacrilege" (p.135), Joe does not even bother to think "My name ain't McEachern. My name is Christmas." (p.136) So firmly a part of Joe is his name and its associations, he does not need to consciously think it.

The section concerning the McEacherns serves primarily to display Joe's increasingly negative feeling towards women and to give it religious ramifications. McEachern is a hard, brutally righteous man, but Joe neither fears nor hates him.

It was the woman: that soft kindness which he believed himself doomed to be forever victim of and which he hated worse than he did the hard and ruthless justice of men. (p.158)

McEachern impersonally metes out punishment or reward, whichever is called for by his system of ethics, but Mrs. McEachern has no ethical sense. McEachern has instilled in Joe the Calvinistic concept of good and evil, and Joe most certainly aligns Mrs. McEachern, woman, with the forces of evil. He sees her, as he does the dietician, as deceptive, unpredictable and "casting a faint taint of evil about the most trivial of actions." (p.157) Joe constantly and maliciously betrays her. When she tells him about her secret cache of money, he steals from her and is confounded by her refusal to react. When she interferes with his punishment by bringing him food, he flings it on the floor.

Joe's disgust and distrust of women are given sexual overtones as he reaches puberty. When he learns of menstruation, he is outraged and tries to buy immunity with a ritual baptism in sheep's blood. Later, when Bobbie Allen again explains menstruation to him, he becomes physically sick and envisions a row of "ranked and moonlit urns" oozing with "something liquid, deathcolored, and foul." (p.178) To Christmas the menstrual cycle is not the symbol of fertility and the life force but "pericdic filth." (p.173)

Joe reacts to his first sexual encounter with violence. When he enters the shed where the negro girl with whom he is expected to have intercourse is waiting, he is overcome with revulsion and beats her. This episode links, in both Joe's and the reader's minds, Joe's revulsion for women with his concept of Negro. For it is not any woman he meets in the shed but "womanshenegro" (p.147), the apotheosis of all women. Joe reacts with the same revulsion precipitated earlier by the dietician's toothpaste. But this time the "something in him trying to get out" (p.146) is not mere physical illness but spiritual outrage. Joe, imbued with McEachern's Calvinistic system of ethics, sees the negro girl not only as revolting but as evil and death-linked; her eyes, in the darkness, are "two glints like reflection of dead stars" at the bottom of a "black well." (p.147) He reacts to this evil in the way his stepfather has taught him to react--with physical violence. Later, when Joe and Bobbie Allen have become lovers and are lying in bed together, he tells her that he has "some Nigger blood" (p.184) as if trading a lover's secret. Still later, after Bobbie has betrayed him and destroyed the last shreds of his youthful idealism, Joe's belief that he is part negro becomes, not a lover's secret, but a weapon. He will disgust

women as he has been disgusted. When a white prostitute blandly accepts and dismisses his negro blood, Joe is doubly outraged.

Faulkner tells us again and again that Joe Christmas' conflict is rooted in his mixed blood. Whether or not Joe is, in fact, part negro makes no difference; it is enough that he believes he has black blood. Joe Christmas, schooled in the white world's system of mores, associates Negro with animality and sex; and, schooled in his stepfather's rigid Calvinism, he aligns that animality and sex with evil and damnation. He is outraged by the negro in himself and the focus of his outrage becomes woman, the "womanshenegro" (p.147) of his first sexual encounter. But just as Joe, white man, cannot accept his negro blood, neither can Joe, black man, accept his white blood. He knows that he is different; he has always known, and he rebels against the white world just as fiercely as he does against the black. The murder of his stepfather vividly reflects that rebellion. Joe has always resisted the stranglehold McEachern would have on him; he refuses to pray, to learn a catechism that would name him, Negro, as evil. Though McEachern and the white world's system of morality have made him believe that he is damned, Joe's black blood will not let him admit or accept it. After Joe's murder of McEachern and Bobbie Allen's subsequent betrayal, there is no hope that Joe Christmas will ever fit into the white community. He begins a fifteen-year-long flight down "a thousand savage and lonely streets" (p.207) that run as one street. During this period, we are told, Joe explores the negro world and tries to negate his white blood. We see Joe, while living with a

woman who resembled an ebony carving . . . . trying to breathe into himself the dark odor, the dark and inscrutable thinking and being of negroes, with each suspiration trying to expel from himself the white blood. (p.212)

But Joe can no more become a black man than he can become a wholly white man. His attempts only make him "whiten and tauten, his whole being writhe and strain with physical outrage and spiritual denial." (p.212) Faulkner has been faulted by many critics for leaving a fifteen-year-long gap in the story of Joe Christmas. But Faulkner, by omitting extraneous details, has made his reader focus upon the only important fact in Christmas' life: his inability to reconcile his white and black bloods. He remains, at the end of these lost years, a man "driven by the courage of flagged and spurred despair." (p.213)

Joe's struggle is clarified further in the next few chapters of Light in August in which Joe meets and enters into a relationship with Joanna Burden. There are many obvious similarities between Joe and Joanna, from the trivial sharing of a common first name to the "black curse" each struggles against. R.G. Collins, in his essay on Light in August, emphasizes their similarity in background. Calvin Burden, Joanna's grandfather, is surely no less race mad than old Doc Hines. Though one is an abolitionist and the other an advocate of white supremacy, both agree that "the Negro is the original accursed of God and therefore represents the white man's guilt."<sup>24</sup> Collins also points out the parallel between the murder of Joanna's half-brother over a question of negro voting and Christmas' own death later in the book. Both men are of mixed race (like the younger Calvin, Christmas' father is said to be, in fact, of Mexican not negro ancestry), and both die martyrs to "the curse of the black race." (p.240) Faulkner leaves no



doubt in the reader's mind that Joanna is very much the spiritual sister of her half-brother though he was killed a decade before her birth. It is at his grave that her father confers to four-year-old Joanna her terrible heritage--"the curse of every white child that ever was born and that ever will be born." (p.239) Joanna, innocent till that moment, is now cursed by the same spectre that haunted her grandfather and brother before her. She envisions the Negro "not as a people, but as a thing, a black shadow in the shape of a cross" (p.239) upon which the white race is forever crucified. Like Christmas, Joanna equates Negro with sin, a sin with which she, as surely as Christmas, is hopelessly tainted. Also like Christmas Joanna exhibits a kind of dual personality which further complicates her belief that the Negro represents white man's sin, guilt, and damnation.

Christmas, a divided man himself, at once recognizes and is drawn to Joanna's duality. By night she represents "a horizon of physical security and adultery if not pleasure" (p.221), but during the day she is inviolable and masculine. During the first phase of their relationship, Joanna holds Christmas by his inability to corrupt her. In preceding chapters we have seen that he is both repelled by women because of their inconstancy and feminine weakness and drawn to them out of a need to violate, outrage and, thereby, nullify them. But Joe must violate Joanna anew each night in a struggle as between men "for an object of no value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone." (p.222) He is confounded by her; in frustration he goes to the kitchen and, in a scene reminiscent of an earlier episode with Mrs. McEachern, smashes the plates of food she has set out for him. At last,



after a six-month interval, Joanna capitulates to Christmas. Ironically, he feels he will now have the upper hand. Joanna's surrender is "in words." (p.227) She relates to Christmas her family history and pointedly reaffirms the fact that, as Christmas has already told her, he is "part nigger." (p.240)

During the second phase of their relationship, Joanna, "the New England glacier," gives way "to the fire of the New England biblical hell." (p.244) Joe, no longer mere man to Joanna, becomes, instead, Negro, symbol and instrument of her sin and damnation. She has, until now, devoted herself solely to the enlightenment of the Negro not out of compassion but in an attempt to redeem herself from the "black shadow." (p.239) But redemption is forever unattainable for

in order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you.  
But you can never lift it up to your level . . . .  
escape it you cannot. (p.240)

We are aware that Joanna's duality is one of sex; she is at once masculine and feminine. We now come to realize that her duality, like Christmas', is also one of spirit. By day Joanna remains manlike, austere, living an ascetic life devoted to her cause of redemption, but in darkness the "night sister" (p.248) emerges, manifesting herself in an obsession with sex. Like Christmas, Joanna is both spiritually inviolable and damned, and also like Christmas, she associates sin with Negro and Negro with sex. Compared to Christmas' "anonymous promiscuity," (p.246) Joanna's new-found sexuality is perverse, corrupt. She almost gleefully exploits her believed sinfulness in an attempt to make up for "her whole past life, the starved years" (p.250) of goodness.

She appoints secret meetings about the house and grounds where Christmas finds her "in the wild throes of nymphomania, her body" (p.245) assuming erotic poses reminiscent of Beardsley. In fits of jealous rage, she accuses and attacks him for imagined betrayals; she exhibits the "rapt . . . and detached interest of a surgeon" (p.244) in the body and its sexual possibilities and displays "an avidity for the forbidden word-symbols; an insatiable appetite for the sound of them on his tongue and on her own." (p.244) Christmas is both frightened and fascinated by Joanna's furious and perverse sexuality, and the reader is made to see Joanna's nymphomania as a function of both the knowledge that she is hopelessly damned and the Puritanical notion that sex equals sin. It is fitting that Christmas, as Negro, precipitates her downfall.

As long as Joanna can maintain her twin identities, she holds Christmas as if by a spell. For Joanna reflects and allows Christmas' own duality; he envisions Joanna as

two creatures that struggled in one body like two moon  
gleamed shapes . . . . Now it would be that still, cold,  
contained figure . . . who, even though lost and damned,  
remained somehow impervious and impregnable; then it would  
be the other, the second one, who in furious denial of  
that impregnability strove to drown in the black abyss. (p.246)

It is an apt description of Christmas himself. Joanna, however, cannot maintain her duality of sex or of spirit. She must eventually give over to her old self and attempt forgiveness, if not salvation. The relationship between Joanna and Christmas fades gradually into its third and final phase. Joanna tries desperately, for a time, to sustain the fury of the second phase, pleading to "be damned a little longer." (p.250) She misinterprets her approaching menopause as pregnancy, a mistake

made bitterly ironic by the reader's knowledge that her relationship with Joe will result not in new life but in death. At last Joanna gives over utterly to the daylight sister; she becomes as frantically obsessed with penance as she was earlier with sex. And Christmas, the object and instrument of her sexual obsession, now becomes the focus of her penitence. She would cleanse herself through him for he is Negro, living symbol of her damnation and shame. She begs him to pray with her, she offers to send him to a negro college where he can study law, she promises to make him overseer of her estate.

Christmas at first will not accept the change in Joanna. Each time she summons him to the house, he prepares himself "like a bridegroom" (p.253) who is "once again on the verge of promise and delight." (p.257) But the desperate hope for a return to their old relationship gives way to the realization that Joanna demands that he assume the role of penitent negro. She insists not only that he choose between his white and black bloods but that he repent, negating thereby "the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be." (p.251) Joe is faced with the obliteration of self; in a terrifying vision he sees himself lost "in the middle of a plain where there was no house, not even snow, not even wind." (p.255) He is at first afraid, then enraged by Joanna's attempts to get him to pray with her. He sees beside her bed the same "prints of knees" (p.264) in prayer he saw as a boy living with the McEacherns; once again he is faced with a choice that is impossible for him to make. Neither Christmas nor Joanna will surrender; "he would not even go away." (p.264) Indeed, he cannot escape, for his conflict with Joanna, as with McEachern before her, is a reflection of the paradox which

is the very center of his being. He is and must be both saved and damned, innocent and corrupt, white and black.

Both Christmas and Joanna realize the futility of their struggle. Joanna has already told him that "it would be better if we both were dead" (p.263), and she prepares to offer up her own life as well as his in final sacrifice to the "black curse." But Joe is not yet ready to give up; in accordance with the "flat pattern" (p.266) of conflict, despair, and violence that characterizes his life, Joe kills Joanna and flees.

During the first days of Joe's flight into the countryside surrounding Jefferson, he remains pitted against both white and black communities. Joe Christmas, black man, is hunted by white society because he has acted out its age-old fear and expectation; he has raped and murdered a white woman. At the same time Joe Christmas, white man, can find no refuge in the black community. When he enters a black country church to seize the pulpit and curse god, the black parishioners take him for the "devil . . . . Satan himself" (p.305) because he is white.

Directly after the episode at the country church, Christmas undergoes an abrupt and rather startling change. In an attempt to elude his pursuers, he exchanges shoes with a negro woman, and the putting on of the "black shoes" (p.313) seems to suggest acceptance of the negro within himself, "the black abyss which had been waiting, trying, for thirty years to drown him." (p.313) He loses track of time and physical sensations; he is no longer driven by hunger, and sleep and wakefulness meld into one semi-conscious state. The old hostility is gone; when he asks what day it is, he does so politely and with thanks. And when he enters a negro cabin to eat, he is astonished that the inhabitants are



"of their brother afraid." (p.317) After days of wandering, Joe is brought back into consciousness by the "urgent need to strike off the accomplished days toward some purpose." (p.317) We soon realize that he is determined to be captured. He sets off for the nearest town, entering again "the street which ran for thirty years." (p.321)

The story of Joe's seven-day flight after murdering Joanna Burden is perhaps the most perplexing passage in Light in August. It is complicated further by our need to understand Joe's actions after Joanna's murder in order to put his own death into perspective. It is fairly obvious that Joe, for a time at least, manages to disassociate himself from his life-long struggle and attain the peace for which he has longed for thirty years. The reasons behind his sudden tranquility, however, are unclear.

We are tempted to view the "black shoes" (p.313) Joe now wears and his mention of Negroes as "brothers" as indications that Joe has assumed the identity of Negro, thereby resolving the conflict between his white and black bloods. Certainly the many parallels between Joe's life and the Christ myth would seem to substantiate this interpretation. Joe's seven days after Joanna's murder become, then, a kind of Passion Play; he cleanses the temple at the black country church, partakes of a Last Supper at the negro cabin, wrestles alone with the knowledge that death and life are no longer in his control, and emerges from solitude on Friday to allow himself to be captured and crucified. Carrying the analogy still further, Christmas' death and ascension into the hearts and minds of the tragedy's onlookers become, like Christ's crucifixion, a redemptive and cleansing force for all of society. Whereas Christ



died to save man from the sins inherited at the Fall, Christmas dies a martyr to the "black curse" with which the white race is tainted and, in dying, redeems all whites.

Although, as many critics have noted, there is much to compel the interpretation outlined above, it presents a number of problems. If we conclude that Joe has made a choice between his white and black bloods and is ready to rejoin the society that demanded of him that choice, we are left wondering why he is still described as an outcast, "a foreigner to the very immutable laws which earth must obey." (p.320) We are also unable to explain why Joe, having allowed himself to be captured, breaks free again. Although Gavin Stevens' analysis of Joe's actions is over simplified, Joe's behavior certainly suggests that he is once again caught up in the struggle between his white and black bloods. But most important are the difficulties that arise from the notion that Joe's death somehow purges society of "the curse of the black race." (p.240) We are urged by the obvious Christ parallel and Faulkner's description of Joe's crucifixion and ascension to view his death as somehow redemptive, but there is little indication that this redemotion involves a casting off of the "black curse." Certainly we cannot offer the tenuous suggestion that Christmas, representing mankind, is reborn in Lena's child "Joe, the son of Joe" (p.264) as proof; and no where is it suggested that the racist attitudes displayed throughout the book have been in any way altered by Joe's death. Society remains unchanged, and life goes on as usual for Lena Grove and, after a moment of illumination, for Reverend Hightower as well.

It is necessary for us to find other reasons for Christmas' sudden

"peace and unhaste and quiet" (p.320) and to arrive at a more valid interpretation of his death. This interpretation, to my mind, is rooted not in the resolution of the conflict between Joe's black and white bloods but in the impossibility of such a resolution. A careful look at the basis of Joe's conflict reveals that his death is not the result of a decision to assume the identity of Negro; he dies because he cannot and will not choose: "he never acted like either a nigger or a white man." (p.331)

Throughout Light in August Joe Christmas is described as a racially divided man, but the outward sign of Joe's duality, his mixed blood, mirrors a more subtle division. Joe is caught in a struggle between body and spirit, between the fact of his physical existence and "spiritual denial" (p.212) of even the most basic of bodily processes. We have come to see that black blood suggests to Christmas sexuality and fecundity, the life force itself. His conception of Negro is reflected by overtly sexual terms like "fecundmellow" and "lightless hot wet" (p.107), and all women become representations of the "Primogenitive Female" (p.107), the "womanshenegro" (p.147) of his first sexual encounter. We also know from Joe's experience at the orphanage, his reaction toward women, and his relationship with Joanna Burden that he equates Negro with sin as well as with sex. It is Joe Christmas, white man, who aligns the life force and all its symbols with evil and for whom the sexual act is not life-engendering but death-linked.

Joe's baptism in sheep's blood after learning about menstruation is a desperate attempt to buy immunity from his black blood and all that it has come to represent. He will not be part of a life force he sees as evil, perverse--"not in my life and my love." (p.174) But Joe cannot

buy immunity; his body, as well as his black blood, is constant reminder that he cannot escape a world of which he is physically a part. All of life has been poisoned by Joe's vision, and he not only alienates himself from "his native earth" (p.320) but turns away from his own flesh as well. Divided against himself, he watches his body "turning slow and lascivious in a whispering of gutter filth like a drowned corpse in a thick still black pool." (p.99) Joe's body is both mark of his own corruption and sign of his approaching death.

Looked at in this way, Joe's problem is not as simple as choosing to be negro or white man; he is and must be black and white, body as well as spirit. It can be argued that, in the seven days following Joanna's murder, Joe comes to terms with the conflict he has been unable to outrun for thirty years and realizes, as Joanna did before him, the futility of struggle. Certainly Joe's comment that he has "been further in these seven days than in all the thirty years" (p.321) indicates that he has attained some degree of self-awareness. And if Joe has come to an understanding of the nature and irresolvability of his conflict, his new sense of peace can be seen as acceptance of death as his only escape. We know by the "black shoes" (p.313) Joe now wears and his referral to Negroes as "brothers" that he acknowledges, for a time at least, the fact of his black blood; but Joe, looking still through the eyes of a white man, sees "the black tide creeping up his legs" (p.321) not as capitulation to the role of Negro but as sign of his own corruption and inevitable death.

Although Faulkner suggests that Christmas gains new insight into his internal conflict in the days following Joanna's murder, Joe's thoughts and feelings are never fully revealed. We are prevented from



determining with any certainty, therefore, just what it is that precipitates Joe's "sudden peace" (p.320) and his resolve to give himself up. Perhaps it is only profound physical and mental exhaustion that triggers both Joe's peace and his surrender; Joe admits that he is tired of struggling, "tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket of eggs." (p.319) But it can also be argued that Joe's sense of peace is the result not of self-awareness or weariness but his definite, if brief, release from physical reality. We know that Joe sees his body and all the natural world as corrupt and that his conflict is rooted in a division of spirit against flesh. But in the days following Joanna's death, Joe seems to lose contact with his body; "the immutable laws which earth must obey" (p.320) and which Joe struggles against no longer control him. He finds himself outside of time, the "orderly parade of named and numbered days" (p.314), and he is unable to distinguish day from night, waking from sleep. He is described as "weightless" (p.315), "dry and light" (p.320), as if without physical substance, and the earth is "without solidity" (p.315) beneath his feet. Joe, himself, seems to substantiate this interpretation; he attributes his sudden sense of peace to the loss of his earlier obsessive need to eat. Throughout Light in August Joe rejects food as a symbol not only of life but of his own unwilling participation in its processes. But in the days after Joanna's death, Joe separates himself from physical reality; he is no longer hungry and eats only because he knows he must. Later, when Joe has decided to give himself up to his pursuers, he sees his approaching death as final release from his body and its compulsions: "suddenly the true answer comes to him . . . 'I don't have to bother about having to eat anymore . . . . That's what it is.'" (p.320)

Although several reasons are suggested for Christmas' sense of peace in the days following Joanna's death, none involve capitulation to the identity of Negro and all reflect the complexity and irresolvability of Joe's conflict. For thirty years he has refused either to give up his internal struggle or to submit to the will and wishes of others, but now, prompted by weariness or despair, Joe yields to both. Even before his murder of Joanna, Joe realizes that his past, present and future are of the same "flat pattern, going on" (p.266), but only now, after seven days of solitude, does he accept capture and death as the only way out of "that circle . . . . the ring of what I have already done and cannot ever undo." (p.321) Not only does Joe accept death but he accepts it on society's terms. Realizing that "there is a rule to catch me by" (p.319), he plays out his part in society's charade; he wanders about the streets of Mottstown until he is recognized and captured. Joe, for the first time, bends to the will of society and complies with the rules he has so long rebelled against.

If the story of Joe Christmas were to end here, his passive acceptance of capture and death could be easily compared to Joanna's planned suicide or Hightower's retreat from life into a world of fantasy. But Joe, unlike either Hightower or Joanna, ultimately cannot, will not give up the life-long struggle he has waged against society and himself. Once in Jefferson Joe breaks free of his captors and flees to Hightower's house where, we are told, he hopes to find sanctuary. Faulkner's account of Joe's escape and death reaffirms all we have come to know of Joe's character and life experience.

For thirty years Joe Christmas attempts to integrate a world



hopelessly divided between white and black, good and evil, spirit and flesh. Joe's search for meaning and order in an absurd world is essential; it is a desperate attempt to resolve his paradox of self. Not only is Joe made compulsively aware of the world's division by his own mixed blood, but it also prevents him from accepting the artificial order society imposes upon the world. Society will not allow ambiguity; it dictates that Christmas, and all men, be either white or negro, hero or villain, saint or sinner. Christmas tries for a time to make a choice, but he can accept neither McEachern's white world and its religion nor the black community and all it comes to represent. Joe insists upon seeing things as they are; he will accept nothing less. Unable to choose between his black and white bloods, Christmas is not only cast out of a society that demands that choice but tormented by his own need to unite a divided self. Christmas can, even after his murder of Joanna Burden, elude society, but he cannot escape himself. The "savage and lonely streets" (p.207) run in a circle, and we feel that Joe, backwardlooking and desperate from the beginning, has known all along "that, like the eagle, his own flesh as well as all space was still a cage." (p.151) But Christmas, though caught in an impossible conflict, refuses to compromise or to give up his struggle, and it is that refusal that both precipitates his death and allows him to transcend the world of ordinary men. Like Faustus, he defies society's "Shalt Not" (p. 194); and like Christ, paradoxical symbol of Spirit made Flesh, Joe maintains his duality to the very last. We are urged to see Joe's death, itself as the result of vacillation between opposites; though we must reject Gavin Stevens' account of Joe's actions preceding his death as

absurdly simplistic, it is made clear that Christmas "neither surrendered or resisted." (p.419) Joe is crucified upon the same "black shadow in the shape of a cross" (p.239) Joanna earlier envisioned; he is not victim of his black blood but of the fusion of good and evil, white and black, spirit and flesh both Joe's mixed blood and Joanna's cross have come to represent.

Our sense of Joe's duality and vacillation is heightened further by their contrast to the fanatic rigidity of Percy Grimm. Grimm, much like Simon McEachern, is propelled against Joe not by malice or anger but by ruthless and "blind obedience" (p.426) to a moral code that does not allow ambiguity or indecision. Joe, by refusing to comply with a social order that demands he be "either a nigger or a white man" (p.331), makes his own death inevitable; and Percy Grimm, self-proclaimed protector of law and order and representation of "the implacable undeviation of Juggernaut or Fate" (p.435), is Joe's fitting executioner.

Ironically, Joe's inability to choose between his black and white identities not only brings about his death but gives his life experience profound significance. In contrast to Percy Grimm, obedient pawn "to whatever Player moved him on the Board" (p.437), Joe remains free of any definition of self save his own. His murder becomes a ritual of "shameless savageness" (p.438); Grimm is the high priest of social order, and Joe, in denial of that order, assumes the heroic proportions of a potent and "furious god" (p.438), the years of resistance, violence, and despair culminating in the image of his "raised and armed and manacled hands full of glare and glitter like lightening bolts." (p.438) We are urged to see Joe's death as both ascension and release. Certainly Joe's

separation from his body and his black blood, exaggerated by his ritual castration, puts an end to his struggle; his "peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes" (p.439) seem to welcome non-being as "desire and fulfillment" (p.425), solidarity and peace. But it is Joe's refusal to give up his struggle, to negate all that he knows himself to be, that allows him to transcend the circle that entraps him, that sends him "soaring into their memories forever and ever." (p.440) It is Joe's doomed and heroic struggle that is "of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant." (p.440)

Throughout Light in August, Joe's character and his struggle are counterpointed in the stories of Gale Hightower and Lena Grove. Both Lena and Hightower live in the same divided world Joe inhabits, but they deal with it in decidedly different ways. Our concept of Joe Christmas is strengthened by the contrast Lena and Hightower provide. Hightower shares much of Joe's disgust for life and physical reality. In childhood he turns away from his father's practicality and robust health and identifies, instead, with his mother's "frustration and suffering" (p.450) and "physical betrayal." (p.450) Hightower and his mother live "like two small, weak beasts in a den, a cavern" (p.450) where his father is an intruder, an enemy. Hightower also displays a distrust and ambivalence towards women, the symbol of life, that is remarkably like Christmas's own. He cautions Byron against Lena, whom Hightower believes will corrupt Byron, and he is unable to respond to his own wife and her physical needs. Hightower sees the sexual act not as life-sustaining but "a dead state carried over into and existing still among the living like two shadows chained together with the



shadow of a chain." (p.454) Although Christmas' and Hightower's perceptions of life are equally perverse, Christmas exhibits a desperate vitality; he refuses to let loose his hold on life and his own sense of reality. Hightower, however, runs headlong away from life and its complexities; we are told in countless ways that he is, by his own choice, "not in life anymore." (p.284) In contrast to Christmas' constant and "doomed . . . motion" (p.213) and conflict, Hightower is static and unresisting; his attitude is one of "shrinking and denial." (p.77) Christmas enters into battle with almost everyone he meets, but Hightower surrenders without a fight to the beatings and abuse of the townspeople who oppose him. Christmas' body, though symbol of his sense of corruption, is continually described as "hard, sufficient, potent . . . strong" (p.150); but Hightower's stale and "obese shapelessness" (p.342), reminiscent of "an eastern idol" (p.83), is constant symbol of weakness, "disuse and supineness and shabby remoteness from the world." (p.342) Hightower takes refuge from reality in a life of isolation, marked by a preference for the "sapless trees and dehydrated lusts" (p.301) of Tennyson and a preoccupation with the image of his grandfather's death, "the only day he [Hightower] seemed to have ever lived in." (p.57) For Hightower life is imperfect and ugly, but the vision of "galloping calvary and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse" (p.56) transports him to an uncomplicated and perfect world, "the fine shape of eternal youth and virginal desire." (p.458) But the price Hightower pays for his vision of perfection is his life. Hightower's obsession with the bloodless image of his dead grandfather not only renders his own life sterile but precipitates the destruction of "someone outside



myself" (p.465), Hightower's wife. When Hightower has been coaxed back into life by his participation in the birth of Lena's baby, his involvement in his wife's death becomes horribly clear. Hightower envisions himself encircled by his parishioners' faces which "mirror astonishment, puzzlement, then outrage, then fear" (p.462) not only at his failure as a minister but at his "cold, terrible . . . detachment" (p.463) and abandonment of humanity. But Hightower will not admit any guilt; he refuses to believe that he has taken part in any suffering save his own. He has "bought and paid for" (p.464) immunity from an imperfect world and any part in its imperfection. The "wheel of thinking" (p.462), now in motion, moves onward of its own volition.

Hightower

is unaware of what it is approaching . . . . 'I have bought my ghost, even though I did pay for it with my life. And who can forbid me doing that? It is any man's privilege to destroy himself, so long as he does not injure anyone else, so long as he lives to and of himself.' (p.464)

For Hightower it is a moment of terrible illumination: his obsession with his dead grandfather and denial of life has led not just to his own destruction but to that of his wife. He realizes that he was "instrument of her despair and death" (p.465) and that his life of non-involvement is a lie. He has "not even been clay" (p.465) but part of the same malevolence and imperfection he sought to escape. Hightower's vision continues. In "the lambent suspension of August" (p.465) he sees a halo of faces that blend and fuse as if to suggest the involvement of all men in the lives of their fellows. Even the faces of Christmas and Grimm, established earlier as opposites, merge into an "inextricable

compositeness" (p.465); victim and executioner are indistinguishable.

Hightower's brief return to life, culminating in the realization that he cannot buy immunity from his own humanity, comes too late to permanently restore him or to save Christmas. Hightower flees back into the vision of his dead grandfather and a death-in-life existence. The close of his story finds him

leaning forward in the window, his bandaged head huge and without depth upon the twin blobs of his hands upon the ledge, it seems to him that he still hears them: the wild bugles and clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves. (p.467)

The story of Hightower's retreat from life provides a vivid contrast to the almost heroic struggle and death of Joe Christmas. Perhaps the most provocative suggestion of Joe and Hightower's difference lies in their contrasting visions of the urn. For both the image of the urn acts as metaphor for their perception of life and response to that perception. Christmas envisions a row of cracked and imperfect urns "and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored, and foul." (p.178) Although Joe sees life as perverse, corrupt and death-linked, he rebels and struggles against that vision. He is, above all, desperately and vitally alive. Hightower shares Joe's sense of life's perversity, but unlike Christmas, Hightower reacts to this knowledge by withdrawing from life. In contrast to Christmas' urn, Hightower's vision is rarified and empty; he does not see an urn at all but "a classic and serene vase" (p.453) in which his spirit is no more than "a handful of rotting dust." (p.453)

The shift from urn to vase . . . is a significant one, confirming in this sterile symbol the shift from the pulsing, dark and deathly existential concern of Joe Christmas . . . to the pulseless aesthetic distance of Hightower's non-living purity.<sup>25</sup>

Like the image of his grandfather's "eternal youth and virginal desire" (p.458), Hightower's classic vase might be perfect, but it is also sterile, removed not only from death but "from the harsh gale of living" (p.453) as well.

Unlike either Christmas or Hightower, Lena Grove cannot be defined by her vision of the urn; indeed it is the absence of such a vision that is significant. Lacking the consciousness of Christmas or Hightower, Lena can have no perception of life or vision of its metaphor, the urn; "all-existing rather than envisioning,"<sup>26</sup> she is an actual figure of Faulkner's urn:

she advanced in identical and deliberate wagons as through a sucession of creakwheeled and limpeared avatars, like something moving forever and without progress across an urn. (p.5)

"And how different an urn from those of Christmas' vision, one that holds death as part of the ongoing life process, one that . . . holds the body of death as the womb holds the body of life, and in a symbol that recalls the womb."<sup>27</sup> Lena embodies the endlessly repetitive processes of birth and death. She is the "Primogenitive Female" (p.107) that Christmas struggles against and Hightower denies.

Our sense of Lena's unself-conscious oneness with life that the urn image provides is important to an understanding of her character and her role in Light in August. There has been much debate among critics

over that role. She is seen by some as a kind of earth mother, all-knowing and profound. She and Byron Bunch are often called Faulkner's normative characters, reaffirming the sanity and sanctity of man; Lena, not Christmas, is sometimes called the heroic figure in Light in August. Other critics consider Lena an almost flatly comic character, "more than slightly stupid and more than slightly selfish."<sup>28</sup> Certainly the last chapter of Light in August, in which a furniture dealer recounts the comic escapades of Lena and Byron Bunch, substantiates this view. Lena's behavior is certainly a good deal less than heroic; and her folksy comment, "My, my! A body does get around" (p.480), is simple-minded and absurd in light of the tragedy we have just witnessed. Lena's character is obviously ambiguous, but if we remember that she is a figure on an urn, we need not be bothered by that ambiguity. Lena's lack of consciousness both allows her to be at one with life and renders her shallow and simple-minded in comparison to the painfully self-aware Joe Christmas. Lena's unity is, by necessity, unaware; her face has "either nothing in it, or everything, all knowledge." (p.409)

Faulkner has provided us, in Light in August, with three totally different ways of dealing with the world. Hightower, more than any other character, has an intellectual grasp of life's complexities and contradictions. We have watched him undergo a terrible illumination of self and witnessed his admirable, if useless, attempt to save Joe Christmas. But we are repulsed by Hightower's sterility and weakness; he cannot deal with his newly found self-knowledge and, in characteristic denial, flees back into the foolish image of his grandfather's "heroic" death. Lena embodies the vitality Hightower lacks; we are attracted to



her sanity and robust health. Certainly the story of a pregnant girl on a rather pleasant journey is welcome relief from the sterility of Hightower and the grim obsession of Joe Christmas. But we cannot accept Lena's detachment and lack of insight; her mindlessness mocks the tragedy of Christmas. Moreover, Byron Bunch surrenders to the world view Lena represents, and we cannot consider his sacrifice of self a satisfactory way of dealing with the world. Byron, who for much of Light in August embodies positive values and human concern the other characters lack, is turned buffoon by his capitulation to Lena. Joe Christmas is clearly the most compelling and heroic of all the characters in Light in August. Made compulsively aware of the world's division by his own mixed blood, Joe struggles desperately to integrate a world and a self hopelessly divided between white and black, spirit and flesh, good and evil. Joe's heroism is dependent, at least in part, upon the contrast Hightower's cowardice and Lena's mindlessness provide. Unlike either Hightower or Lena, Joe both sees and confronts the dilemma the world presents. But Faulkner offers us no real solution to that dilemma in the story of Joe Christmas. Joe can neither resolve his paradox of self nor accept the arbitrary order society imposes upon the world. His refusal to choose between his white and black bloods, to negate all that he knows himself to be, both establishes his heroism and precipitates his death. Joe Christmas remains, to the very last, perfect metaphor for a world Faulkner sees as simultaneously ordered and chaotic, meaningful and absurd.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cleanth Brooks, Introduction to Light in August (New York, 1968), p. vi.
2. Irving Howe, William Faulkner, a Critical Study (New York, 1952), p. 201.
3. John L. Longley, Jr., Faulkner, a Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 173.
4. Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven, 1963), p. 72.
5. Ibid., p. 47.
6. Alfred Kazin, Faulkner, a Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 151.
7. Ibid., p. 153.
8. Collins, p. 105.
9. Ibid.
10. Brooks, Yoknapatawpha Country, pp. 48-49.
11. Howe, p. 209.
12. Francois Pitavy, Faulkner's Light in August (Bloomington, 1973), p. 7.
13. Brooks, Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 48.
14. Pitavy, p. 7.
15. Ibid., p. 8.
16. Ibid., p. 45.
17. Ibid., p. 8.
18. Walter Slatoff, Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner
19. Ibid., p. 262.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 258.
22. Ibid., p. 89.

23. William Faulkner, Light in August (New York, 1968), p. 28. All subsequent references to this work will be indicated by parenthesis within the text.
24. Collins, p. 128.
25. Murray Krieger, The Play and the Place of Criticism (Baltimore, 1967), p. 114.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
28. Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, a Critical Interpretation (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 83.

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