

Tribhuvan University

Representation of Racial Conflict in Faulkner's *Light in August*

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**Letter of Recommendation**

This is to certify that Samiksha Lamichhane has completed his thesis entitled "Racial Conflict in Faulkner's *Light In August*" under my guidance. I recommend this thesis to be submitted to the Research Committee for final examination of viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis, entitled " Racial Conflict in Faulkner's *Light In August*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Samiksha Lamichhane have been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Abstract

This research explores the issue of representation of racism in Faulkner's *Light in August*. Racism creates adverse conditions for misguided people born out of the union between two couple from two different races. In Faulkner's *Light in August*, the whites are demonstrative of grudge against non-white people. For loving and getting impregnated by a Mexican Mulatto, Milly is tragically tortured by her father. Her father kills her lover and subjects her to a torturous death. Even Joe Christmas, the son of Milly, expects recognition and human behavior from his neighbors. But he is denied even the minimal degree of recognition. He is ridiculed even by the white women he loves. Tormented by callous treatment and racist arrogance, Joe becomes unpredictable and violent. The white discriminates nonwhite even in the supply of basic items which every human being expect from the sphere of humanity. For the white people, non-whites are inferior. Nonwhite characters like Joe Christmas do not get a promotion if there is any white man waiting on the list. There must have been a number of signs showing prejudice in his working environment as Christmas reaches this conclusion of racial biases. In the midst of prejudice and other anti-racial hassles, the nonwhite like Joe do not hesitate adapt to the shifting genuine-locale. The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, communication and excommunication surround social space in the last part of the novel. The conservative model of the hegemony of white people is portrayed pathetically in the novel.

### **Representation of Racial Conflict in Faulkner's *Light in August***

This research probes the issue of racism in Faulkner's *Light in August*. Racism can be called the institutionalized form of racist practice. Many social and economic factors are joined in the establishment of racism in society. Freedom and recognition are precious things to Joe Christmas. His birth has the history of racial violence. His mother, Milly, is impregnated by a Mexican man whom her father does not like. Milly's father kills the Mexican man and gets her died in a labour pain. The pain of denial and haunting history of his birth go on affecting the life of Christmas. His search for recognition and stability in life is further ruined by the racist responses of various people of Jefferson.

Racism digs deep in the psychology of people. It kills even the last trace of joy and happiness from life. If racism takes a deep-rooted form, humanity slowly dies. It would be really tough to deal with this evil. Christmas is not able to retain memories from his tragic origin. His whole life is the central vehicle for a broader self-determination. He is knowledgeable about his troubled and murderous origins. So, his reflection on his origin differentiate him from the other Americanized. The legacy of racial pride is accordingly passed to future family generations.

Miss Burden is also a social vagrant. She lives in the small town of Jefferson, Mississippi. She has an obsessive love affair with Christmas. She is internally conflicted. Her strict religious upbringing forbids sex outside of marriage. She is simultaneously desperate to remove her misunderstanding with Christmas. She begins to pray for Christmas to turn around his life and commit to their relationship, her act pushes Christmas away from her. Her need for home conflicts drastically with his inner desire. The lovers' quarrel results in homicide. Christmas kills Miss Burden,

avoiding luckily the bullet she has planned for him. This act effectively ends the whiskey business with Joe Brown. Brown is so upset to have lost his easy money supply. He sets the Burden house afire with the corpse inside. Race refers to a taxonomic designation. This designation is used to describe a group of people having the same genealogical, cultural, social and linguistic origin.

People of certain race generally almost the same and similar skin color, taste, preference, custom and mindset. It is easy in pointing out some people belonging to this race and others belong to different race. It is a category with the use of which there is no bias and negativity. Historical evidence can prove that racism is a politically motivated and manipulated strategy. It is used to assert the hegemony and supremacy of one race over other. When racism takes an institutionalized form, it becomes a serious road pike. Racism is the biased programs to assert the superiority and hegemony of certain groupings of people.

Institutionalized racism sets up the basis for the various discriminatory practices. Racism offers such a platform in which people victimize vulnerable groups of people from different race. Racist practice indirectly supports racial discrimination. When racism-backed discrimination pervades in society, the victims of such discriminatory practices are culturally traumatized. The psychology of the victims of discrimination provoked by racism is likely to be broken. "Assaulted by racism-backed discrimination, they are prone to nightmare, anxiety attack, hallucinatory condition and sinister premonition of being chased by an unknown person" (Benjamin 72). This sort of condition is perfectly applicable in *Light in August*. Social conceptions and groupings of races change over time, involving folk taxonomies.

Joe Christmas internalizes black blood into his person. He is a part nigger. He

lives the life of a white man. Inwardly he lives as a white man. He knows he is only hiding as white. He does have black blood, which made him Negro. Joe Christmas works as a day laborer. He earns a bit more money selling booze on the side. He is having a very strange affair with a white woman. She seems not to care about his work.

The researcher makes use of the theory of racial identity, racism and slavery that lived in American soil for a long time. At first the researcher defines the term, 'race', 'racism' and slavery which take institutionalized form due to the penetrating impact of racist practices. When racist practices reach apex, the victims appear to be anonymous. In the state of anonymity, the victims of slavery and institutionalized racism seek their identity. Their identity is solely based on the origin, culture and tradition of the victims. In this situation, the historic-cultural tradition and the ground reality at the present are often taken into consideration while exploring and affirming racial identity.

The whole life of Joe Christmas is full of the burden he feels of this black blood. He cannot explain it. He cannot deal with it. He hides himself away from the rest of the white community. He is connected very closely to the Southern view of race. A good number of a critics and scholar have made their own opinion about the text sidelining the racism that the researcher is applying in the text. Panescu Irina-Carmen is a noted critic of Faulkner who examines the entire spectrum of the author's thematic content. Carmen makes the following remarks with the whole thematic content of Faulkner:

Faulkner is as real today as he was a century ago. His Yoknapatawpha County comes as an additional proof that sometimes the imagination equals the present reality or it goes further, into anticipating a future

reality. The men and the events in the book come to re-affirm an essential fact, that is, fiction makes the real appear more real than it actually is, or than it should be. Sadly but incontestably, an acclaimed writer can descend into the labyrinth of the human mind and extract from there all the evil that we recognize afterwards in life. (10)

Faulkner takes as his literary business the reaffirmation of essential facts. Facts related to human life, history and geography is dramatized by Faulkner in most of his novels. He can also discover all the beauty and innocence that people see in their lives. Faulkner did have the talent of drawing people into novels. He makes his characters move on the stage of life.

The term 'racism' is often used in a loose and unreflective way. It is used to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or people toward another. Race, in particular, is the classification of the human beings into different groups that are based on physical characteristics. There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race. The socio-historical categories are employed to differentiate among groups. These categories reveal themselves to be imprecise if not completely arbitrary" (Benjamin 172). Racism is misbehavior of a group of people on the basis of color. It is a blinker hatred, envy or prejudice.

Racism is evolved because people believe their race is supreme over other. It includes the lack of knowledge and experience and is raised in the negativeness of the people. Therefore, it is inherently unchangeable. The concept of race was originally introduced in the field of natural history merely "as a convenient way to refer to groups of human beings in different geographic locations not with the intention of separating human beings into physiologically distinct groups"(Benjamin 27).

Racial differences create cavernous divides in our psychological

understandings of whom we are and who we should be. Madonna G. Constantine delivers the following remarks regarding race:

Racial meanings have varied tremendously over time and between societies. Racism continues to tear at the soul of America.

Understanding the definition and impact of racism is critical to all citizens of this country, from parents to educators to politicians. Race is indeed a pre-eminently socio-historical concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. (22)

Constantine attempts to define race in context by saying racism is very vast word in it self. It is deep rooted in the American soil. It is very complicated to understand the meaning of racism for everyone because it is made by the combination of social relations and historical context of where the people are surround from.

Hunt Nigel discover the encyclopedic design of the novel, *Light in August*. The vast hotchpotch of incidents, events, their interconnections and coincidental occurrences demands too much attention from readers. But its vastness offers plenty of possibility of getting life-affirming lessons and wisdom. Hunt Nigel is puzzled by the lengthier and complicated design of *Light in August*. His brief view regarding this aspect of the novel is cited below:

As a narrative, *Light in August* is an encyclopedia of open connections. The story's vast catalog of people, places, and incidents is held together by associations that are compelling but imprecisely articulated. The clearest example of this phenomenon is the relationship between the successive generations portrayed in Faulkner's chronicle. Joe's abrupt transitions oblige the reader to

perform the connective tasks of identifying patterns of behavior and instances of narrative repetition. (33)

Nigel's view is undoubtedly credible because *Light in August* includes various incidents and events. The inclusion of transition is an innovative step in the history of the discourse on racism. Joe is struck by nonstop incidents in which he is trapped. To be close to the racial practice is one thing but one actually require the strength to free himself from the brutal cycle of slavery and confinement.

Robert Alter believes that race relation has undergone massive change in America. Those who were oppressed and enslaved are now equipped with every rights which a white person can get in America. In this current context, Faulkner's historical mode of repeating the painful past hardly carries conviction. Alter asserts his view in the following extract:

The relationship between the history of slavery in North America and the current state of race relations in the USA remains unarticulated in the story itself, requiring the reader of Joe's saga to construct a belief system capable of imposing coherence on this labyrinthine constellation of accidents, genetics, language, and capital. By conceiving of his text as an indefinite network of implied but inconclusive interpretive possibilities, Faulkner suggests we all collectively construct the meaning of racism, according to the stories which constitute our own mythological traditions. (41)

History cannot be important at all time. Some histories are meant to be buried in the grave of time. If there was even small trace of such brutal racial discrimination in today's world then this historical reminiscence can be fruitful. But present scenario has undergone huge progress and change. It would not be relevant and sensible to

scratch the old wound when the society is heading towards the unique level of progress.

Another critic and professor Cleanth Brooks define it differently and wrote "The novel much have been written about community in yokhapatawpha. The title town is old fashioned and backward looking. It is suspicious of any outsiders who would disturb life, and when it can not expel ailen It tries to wall him off in a kind of cultural cyst as bees enclose withwaxen walls a bettle or wasp that has got inside the hive."(1)

Brooks is right because in this novel people get suspicious to the outsider (hightower, chritmas, Joe brown) and refuse to accept them in the community. Although they had tried their best to accumulate in the community but they suffered by their cultural rules and regulation.

Racial ideology resurfaces in different forms. In this regard, Michael Omi makes the following recommendations regarding race and racial relation:

The continuing persistence of racial ideology suggests that these racial myths and stereotypes cannot be exposed as such in popular imagination. They are, we think, too essential, too integral, to the maintenance of social order. Of course, particular meaning, stereotypes and can change, but the presence of a system of racial meaning and stereotypes, of racial ideology, seems to be permanent feature of American culture. (26)

Racial ideology is essential to maintain social order. It is not always negative in all time. Racial treatment changed African American get equal rights as of white in America. But racial ideology is the permanent feature as it maintain the society and its dignity. This is an identity politics that intends to keep the social order smooth.

Richard Schickel notices subversive ethos in *Light in August*. Faulkner discourages the trend to separate history from fiction. Both fiction and history can come in joint cohesive form. Faulkner is a good example of how the fusion of both history and fiction serves humanity trapped in the chaos of silliness and shortsightedness. Schickel discloses the following viewpoint:

*Light in August* destabilizes conventional categories of fiction and reality in a way that mirrors the sense in which racism itself is a tragic historical reality supported by an elaborate fiction of racial superiority. By challenging the Western separation of history and fiction, *Light in August* has been enormously successful in provoking dialogue and deepening our understanding of the factions that constitute our social environment. (27)

Faulkner's praiseworthy accomplishment is similar to that of his far off ancestor Joe Christmas. He is aware of the genealogical history only through the help of narrative either written or oral. It is through the fusion of historical recollection with fiction that he becomes aware of summoning the power of myth.

The renowned critics of American Literature Laura Doyle wrote "Light In August exposes race as the phantom that both promises and withdraws the body's unity- and nation's. The novel reveals, on the one hand, how race in the United States disciplines bodily self-relation and choreographs from within a fateful plot for the body's movements; yet on the other hand, Faulkner's text exposes race as an empty category, undefinable and unverifiable, projected onto the "coloured" or "white" body from outside."(348) her definition of this text lurks between the categories of real and imagined, history and nature, black and white.

Although all these critics examined this novel from multiple perspectives,

none of them investigate theory of racial identity. There are differences in the way the idea and the meaning of the race are interpreted in recent times. Because there has been a lot of change in the social belief both inside and outside the country, race is interpreted differently. Even the meaning and representation of race politics have been greatly changed and its strategic importance relative to other aspect of government has been formed. “The theme of primal racial difference is not being articulated into political languages of nationality, culture and belonging in the simple exclusionary ways that it was not so very long ago”( Gilroy 227). However, the discrimination is operated through newer strategies and policies such as deployment of positive of images and ideological and dominative racism.

This research intends to examine how a man with divided racial background happens to develop bloody and dreadful mentality and how he finally meets his tragic doom. In Faulkner’s *Light in August*, Joe Christmas is too tragic to ponder on this tragic fate. He not only destroys himself but others also. Social mockery, discrimination and other alienation practice compel him to ponder deeply on his divided and disgraceful origin and background. He commits the dark shadow of racism works as the motivating factors.

The researcher makes use of Franz Fanon's theoretical insight regarding the issue of race in his popular work *Black Skin White Mask*. Black man does not represent coherent self. He is doomed to get fragmented. The compulsion to survive in the world of cultural dualities is largely responsible for the inception of dualistic experiences. Addressing this sort of problematic situation, Fanon makes the following remarks:

The Black man has two dimensions- one with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man

and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question. No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into Man. Here is objective evidence that express reality. (17)

The compulsion to dwell in the two different world inhabited by two different norms and values implant a seed of division in Black people. The more they are immersed in the habit to copy white man's norms, life style and societal factors, the more fragmented they become. The worst thing is that Black people behave with the white in one way and they behave in an exactly opposite way to other fellow beings.

The discovery oriented culture and the culture of inquiry can hardly flourish in a world dominated by those Blacks and other people who are in a morbid habit to copy and repress the immense potentiality for new creation. Dwelling upon this view, Fanon makes the following observation:

When one reads that after the age of twenty-nine a man can no longer love and that he must wait until he is forty-nine before his capacity for affect revives, one feels the ground give way beneath one. The only possibility of regaining one's balance is to face the whole problem, for all these discoveries, all these inquiries lead only in one direction: to make man admit that he is nothing, absolutely nothing and that he must put an end to the narcissism on which he relies in order to imagine that he is different from the other animals (23).

Inner sense of whole is almost alien to those Blacks who are on the track of copy and imitation. Any longing for the cultivation of the pure and pristine, the original and the

awakened is simply alien and elusive to them. It is the outer compulsion or the outer cause that implants seed of inner ruin and damage.

In pointing out both the inner and outer fragmentation of Blacks, Fanon dwells upon the relationship between language and the language embodies a world in itself. In Fanon's words, " It becomes evident that we were not mistaken in believing that a study of the language of the Antilles Negro would be able to show us some characteristics of his world" (39). There is a retaining wall relation between language and group. To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who "wants to be white will be whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is" (39).

On the basis of all these theoretical remarks and insights, it can be asserted that Faulkner's stand tilts towards the cause of those Blacks who are bound to seesaw between temptation and inferiority, fascination and fear, sense of superiority and inferiority and finally the urge to shine outwardly and the urge to hide ugly self.

Joe Christmas comes to a new place around Jefferson. He is partly white and partly black. He was hanging with his broken identity of being both white and black is trying to search his racial identity in his whole life. He spends thirteen years without doing anything significant. He kills his precious time of his life. In the beginning, people of the area where Christmas lives talk about the birth mark in his face. For them, it is really puzzling to think how a man of black blood inside named as Christmas. The following extract refers to this sort of racist trace in people's conversation:

His name is what? One said. 'Christmas'. Is he a foreigner? Did you everhear of a white mannamed Christmas? The foreman said. I never heard of nobody a tall named it, the other said. And that was the first

time Byron remembered that he had ever thought how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time (27).

Joe's freedom to live in whichever way he lives is called into question by his neighbors. Actually, Christmas is a name given to him in orphanage and later he was adopted by diehard puritan fundamentalist. The white people in Joe's surrounding are racist because they cannot bear to see a nigger boy taking the word 'Christmas' after his first name. Racist mindset of the white is evident in their undue concern with Joe's surface.

Most of the blacks fall into the underclass and lower class. They are discriminated since their arrival at New Land. Since then onward, their enthusiasm to grab a higher social position and self-realization has been overlooked in terms of color. In a racist and discriminatory society, the culture and the aspirations of the working class are always subjugated.

In the casual conversation among the people, instances of overt racism in the historical past come. Their talk shows how the reminiscence of overt-racism come resurfaces spoiling the harmony and intimacy. The narrator goes on to say "A Yankee, a lover of negroes, about whom negroes in the town there is still talk of queer relations with negroes in the town and out of it, despite the fact it is now sixty years since her grandfather and her brother were killed on the square"(37). It is always the chronic memory of racist aggression that comes to ruin the peaceful thoughts in the present lives of racially excluded and oppressed blacks. The following extract provides the case of the painful resurfacing of racist aggression:

He had just turned twenty when he was killed in the town two miles

away by an ex-slaveholder and confederate soldier named Sartoris, over a question of Negro voting (187).

Characters could not help recollecting those days of past when blacks are killed. The fugitive slaves are targeted by whites without any sense of guilt and fear. The traces of racism linger shaking the sense of security which blacks had started experiencing in the post-civil war era.

Joe Christmas is an ambiguous man. He appears suddenly at the mill one day in search of a job. After gaining employment, he is soon joined at the mill by another man named Joe Brown. The two formed a partnership. They make and sell liquor illegally. He eventually quits this illegal transaction. Byron Bunch is deceived and unsettled. Lena Grove suddenly appears at the mill one day. He tells the town's disgraced former minister of his efforts to care for the girl. Soon, Lena comes to realize that the man she seeks is really Joe Brown. Upon Lena's arrival in town, Brown is being held in the town jail after the murder of a local woman, Joanna Burden. Joe Christmas, Miss Burden's occasional lover, is the chief suspect.

Gail Hightower secures a church in Jefferson to feed his obsession with his grandfather. A confederate cavalryman is killed in the town during the Civil War. Hightower's young wife is unfaithful. She deals with mental health problems. She eventually dies in a fall from the window of a Memphis hotel room. She stays with another man. A scandal ensues. The Jefferson parishioners turn on Hightower.

Joe Christmas is left on the steps of an orphanage. He has overheard Jesebele (a lady worked as keeper in orphanage) having sex with a young doctor Charles in her room. She worries she will lose her job. To eliminate this risk, she threatens to expose young Joe's biracial background. She has him transferred to an orphanage for black children. She discusses the plan with the orphanage's janitor. He kidnaps Joe and

takes him to Little Rock. He is found and returned, only to be adopted two weeks later by Mr. McEachern, and his wife.

African Americans and their plight are enough to show how biracial people fall victims to unexpected consequence. There is division in their psychic condition. In this regard, it is worth quoting, Dubois. Defining double consciousness, W. E. B. Dubois argues:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder(5).

To be black, in that sense, means to be so in exclusively white terms. "A black living in the white society suffers from the double consciousness- the double standards of a citizen, where one is born an American but discovers that one is not fully a citizen by virtue of being racially designated black. Why, one ask, is being black treated as antipathetic being as American?"(Du Bois 64) This leads to the notion of irreconcilable doubleness, where being black does not equal being an American yet much of what is original about being an American. Then, there occurs a crisis in identity and the self-respect of the African American. What Du Bois argues is that double consciousness is a situation in which an African American sees his self from the perspective of an American. He finds two selves: American and African. And this dual selves leaves him in confusion.

Chritmas is defined or asumed to be part black, or a forigner throughout the

novel. He is also accepted by white until he claim to be a pat nigger. Throughout the novel, Christmas identifies himself as black and then waits for the reaction he will get how people will change their view on him after knowing it. We eventually learn how Christmas is identified as black by other children in orphanage, a dietician named Jessele and janitor Mr. Hines who's later known as his grandfather. Every character assume his whiteness until he tells them. He first define how other will define him rather than define himself. He attempt to confirm that he will be judge differently if his blackness is known and most of the time he is correct. His doubleness leave him to confusion to identify himself. He is tormented and eventually torn a part by his lack of cohesive identity.

Joe's new foster father subjects him to regular beatings. As Joe grows and enters puberty, he passionately loves Bobbie. Bobbie is a prostitute. She works as a waitress in the nearby town. When Mr. McEachern catches his son at a dance with Bobbie, a fight occurs. Joe kills his foster father by smashing a chair over his head. Contrary to his expectation, Joe is abandoned by Bobbie. Joe embraces a life on the run. He wanders for more than fifteen years.

Joe Christmas stays in the cabin on Joanna Burden's property. The two quickly become lovers. Their relationship is marked by passion, violence, and long periods. They ignore each other. Miss Burden wants a child and claims to be pregnant. But Joe is strongly opposed to the idea. After a time, Joe Brown comes to live with Joe Christmas in his cabin. Miss Burden tries to help Joe Christmas financially. He insisted him to kneel down and pray. Her meddling only provokes his ire. One night, he savagely attacks and kills her with a razor after she tries to fire a pistol at him. Miss Burden attempts to save Joe from every hazard. His inability to realize it generates conflict. The following extract makes reality about this complication clear:

They looked at one another. 'Joe', she said, 'for the last time. I don't ask it. Remember that. Kneel with me.' 'No', he said. Then he saw her arms unfold and her right hand come forth from beneath the shawl. It held an old style, single action, cap and ball revolver almost heavier than a small rifle. But the shadow of it and of her arm and hand on the wall did not waver at all, the shadow of both monstrous, the cocked hammer monstrous, backhood and viciously poised like the arched head of snake; it did not waver at all(212).

Joe Christmas is apprehended on the streets of nearby Mottstown. His biological maternal grandfather, Uncle Doc Hines, makes his way through the crowd to curse Joe. He calls for his death. When the officials from Jefferson arrive to take charge of the prisoner, Mrs. Hines breaks through the crowd as well. She hopes to see the face of the grandson who is supposed to have died as a child. The Hineses then take the train to Jefferson together.

The model of racial identity is originally developed for African Americans to understand the black experience in the United States. Tina Q. Richardson says remarks:

The individual ideally moves from a complete unawareness of race through embracing black culture exclusively toward a commitment to many cultures and addressing the concerns of all oppressed groups. The model of racial identity is helpful in outlining racial identity as a dynamic progression, as influenced by those in a particular individual's ethnic group as well as those outside it. Grounded in the context of the civil rights movement, this model is problematic (147).

Richardson starts from the premise that before blacks experience identity, they are

first unaware of their race and the race of others. He describes cycles of racial identity development as a lifelong, continuously changing process for blacks. He theorizes that individuals move through angry feelings about whites and develop a positive black frame of reference.

Byron and the Hineses arrive at Hightower's house. They reveal that Joe Christmas's father is a circus worker. His father had tried to run off with the Hineses' daughter before Uncle Doc shot and killed him. Eventually, Uncle Doc placed the baby in the orphanage in Memphis. He works as a janitor. Byron wants Hightower to lie and claim that Joe Christmas is with him on the night of Joanna Burden's murder. Hightower becomes angry and asks them to leave.

Lena goes into labor. By the time Byron arrives with the doctor, Hightower has already delivered the baby. Mrs. Hines mistakenly believes that "Mrs. Beard watched him now. He thought that she was still trying to get his meaning. But what she was doing was watching him grope" (65). Byron arranges to have Joe Brown sent to Lena's cabin; upon arriving. He is shocked to see Lena holding his newborn son. He slips out a back window, and runs away.

Byron sees Brown escape and tries to stop him. Unfortunately, the much larger man beats Byron soundly. He escapes on a passing train. Joe Christmas, meanwhile, escapes from his captors as well. He is being led across the town square. Before long, he is tracked down, shot, killed, and castrated in Hightower's kitchen. Afterward, the aging Hightower muses on his past. He has no option other than preparing for his own death.

Only the conflict and chaos prevail in the society. Joe and his friend live with the expectation that their innocence and noninvolvement will be proved. Joe is haunted by the racially motivated remarks of his neighbors since his childhood to his

adulthood. He wants to get involved in the social activities and wants to be a valuable part of the society but alienating and humiliating remarks make him feel inferior. When he was in orphanage the other children did not play with him they tease him calling him negro. Even a lady who worked in it thought "He will look just like a pea in a pan full of a coffee bean"(99). His aimless life is made uncomfortable by plenty of unjust remarks.

Jhelen Myra highlights on the following:

A man cannot know who he is unless he can first identify himself racially. The emphasis is not on who but on what, as if clear racial category were essential to the constitution of subject identity. In other words, this racist "what" implies that the constitution of subject is based on an immanent, "natural" condition, and that as long as subjects do not know what race they are, they will not be able to develop a healthy ego capable of self-enriching self-assertation, i.e. transcendence, in whatever modest proportion(22).

In this novel Christmas in his whole life goes hither and thither to find his real identity. His attempt to establish in both race failed as he is not able to find out his actual racial categories. He rides in both boats.

"Because the black blood drove them first to the Negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there. It is the black blood which snatched up the pistol. The white blood would not let him fire it... and it was the white blood... then I believed that white blood... It was the black blood which swept him by his own desire.... And then the black blood failed him again, as it must have in crisis all his life"(449).

He is teased by white for being a part nigger and hated by black for being white skin. He is neither become a white nor live a peaceful life as black. He got lost

by searching his dignity and identity in his whole life. From his childhood he is rejected by both groups. The following extract makes it clear.

Old Doc Hines found out how he was watching the nigger working in the yard, following him around the yard while he worked, until at last the nigger said, "what you watching me for, boy?" and he said, "how come you are a nigger?" and the nigger said, "who told you I am a nigger, you little white trash bastard?" and he said, " I aint a nigger," and the nigger said, " you are wrose than that. You don't know what you are(288) .

Even the stranger on the way begins asking question regarding how Joe came to be regarded as Christmas. He lives in a run-down cottage on the estate of a middle-aged spinster named Miss Burden. He makes and sells illegal whiskey for a few customers.

Bunch remembers the day about six months ago. A new worker named Joe Brown joined Christmas at the mill. Brown is notoriously known as a loudmouth bootlegger. When situation turns dreadful, Christmas quit his job at the mill. He and Brown are seen driving around town in a new car. The following extract shows how they choose to live idle and purposeless life after they are surrounded by racism:

They say that chritmas started it by himself three years ago, just yelling selling to a few regular customers that didn't even know one another. But when he took Brown in with him, I reckon Brown wanted to spread out. Selling it by the half a pint out of his shirt bosom in any alley and to anybody. Selling what he never drunk, that is. And I reckon the way they got the whiskey they sold wouldnot have stood much looking into. Because about two weeks after Brown quit out at the mill and taken to riding around in that new car for his steady works

(61).

Both Joe and Burden are seen as foreigners. Joe is an enigmatic racial presence. Miss Burden is a transplanted Yankee. She is driven by liberal family politics. Such narrow-mindedness scandalizes the town. This scandal results in the murder of her brother and grandfather. Affected by the malicious impact of racism, both characters are fractured and divided. Two of them begin a search for wholeness. Such a search brings them tragically together.

Benjamin instead refers to the status of white racial identity. Benjamin's model is helpful in outlining interracial exposure as a powerful trigger for the development of racial identity. Benjamin asserts his position thus:

Racial identity for whites is about their perceptions, feelings, and behaviors toward blacks rather than about the development and consciousness of an actual white racial identity. Racial identity models all discuss what we would describe as an intersection between racial perceptions of others and racial perception of self (67).

White took themselves superior as comparison to blacks. They believe black being passive, weak, evil. Their perception of blacks made them racist. Their hatred feeling towards black had become their real identity.

As in the novel there are different characters who have negative or hostile feelings towards black such as Mr. Hines, Percy Grim, Jessebebe, and The Sheriff. They are identified as white by their various racist comments. They hold the higher position in the society and their hatred towards Christmas (black) discover themselves as white racists who don't want to see black come in their level or position.

Joe's personal life is ruined by the aftermath of racially motivated murder and bloodshed. Miss Burden's split is expressed in terms of gender. It is Miss Burden's

impulse and desire for control in their relationship. This desire prompts Joe's violent retaliation against any attempt to "cage or collar him. Fundamentally, Miss Burden does not understand her relationship to Joe. She is drawn to him. She feels a growing dependence on their intimacy. Like Joe, for Miss Burden the bond between them is as unsettling, confusing, and personally threatening as it is desirable and difficult to resist. As a result, she struggles to find ways to make it more defined or tangible, claiming at first that she is pregnant. Then she offers to put him in charge of her affairs. Later, she proposes that he attend a black college and then be trained by her lawyer in Memphis.

Miss Burden makes to codify their relationship. She aims at nurturing and connecting emotionally with Joe. This affectionate move provokes his ire. It sets off a chain reaction ending in Miss Burden's death and the burning of her house. Joe feels doubly threatened by her. She displays both feminine intimacy and a masculine impulse to master and rule. The following extract describes how she happens to fall victims to racially motivated anger and guilt:

They got married the day she got here and two years later I was born and father named me Joanna after Calvin's mother. I do not think he even wanted another son at all. I cannot remember him very well. The only time I can remember him as somebody, a person, was when he took me and showed me Calvin's and grandpa's graves. It was a bright day, in the spring. I remember how I did not want to go, without even knowing where it was that we were going. (190)

Joe sees Miss Burden's actions as a form of patronage. He is aware of unintended condescension that he cannot abide. He is a man trapped by circumstance. He is badly harmed by his own desire to leave his past and his crimes behind him. He feels that he

should free himself from the physical longing. Such a longing binds him increasingly to Miss Burden.

Though the internalization of negative Black Stereotypes may be outside of his or her conscious awareness, the individual seeks to assimilate and be accepted by Whites. In this regard, John W. Wilson makes the following observation:

Instances of social rejection by White friends or colleagues may lead the individual to the conclusion that many Whites will not view him or her as an equal. Faced with the reality that he or she cannot truly be White, the individual is forced to focus on his or her identity as a member of a group targeted by racism. This stage is characterized by the simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one's racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of Whiteness (41).

Joe was targeted by the racist activity. He wanted to live his life as white. But people surrounded by him started to insult him after knowing his biracial reality. The following extract clarifies how he is rejected by his own business partner:

Brown struggled again. "Take your black hand off of me, you damn niggerblood-" the hand shut down again. Again Christmas struck him with the other hand upon the face. Christmas slacked his hand. After a moment Brown spoke, 'you're a nigger, see? You said so yourself. you told me. BT im white. I'm whi...' (79).

Christmas sees himself as from a distance. He is unable to do anything but bear witness to Miss Burden's physical and emotional trials. As Joe gets to know his lover more intimately, he sees "a stranger he would leave her after having sat with her in the dark bedroom, as though they were married" (198). Moreover, a spiritual and physical struggle splits Miss Burden. By accounts contained and invulnerable, "the

end of this phase was not sharp, not a climax, like the first. It merged into the third phase so gradually that he could not have said where one stopped and the other began. It was summer becoming fall” (196). He struggles not only against community, society, and the past but also against himself and racially ruined history of his birth.

Joanna and Joe seem to be alike. Both have no bonds with the community where they live. She is white but works for the sake of Afro-Americans which automatically excludes her from the society where she belongs. He is not sure of his family background and does not want to be assimilated because of his personal fight for his place in the split society. This makes them both outcasts. The motive behind Joanna's work for the black community portrays fully the white Southerners' attitude towards racial differences.

Gwynn and Blotner quotation fits in the situation:

Perhaps the Negro is not yet capable of more than second-class citizenship. His tragedy may be that so far he is competent for equality only in the ratio of his whiteblood.... The Negro is not yet capable of, or refuse to accept, the responsibilities of equality. So we, the white man, must take him in hand and teach him that responsibility. (210)

The Negro is incapable of equality for the reason that he could not hold and keep it. Afro-Americans are cursed by God because they are black. Dark skin color is associated with sin. Joanna can never lift African-Americans to her level, which sets her much higher in the social hierarchy. It satisfies her need for dominance. Joanna tries to push Christmas in the role which is the most desirable for her. Her interference in Christmas life show the dominance of white towards black. Her affection for blacks also show she loved to help them or control them it makes her powerful master among the blacks. Although she is hatred by white but she becomes more powerful among

blacks in that place. She says blacks are the shadow of whites. The existing model of social structure in the American South was explained by the breakneck rhetoric, based on racial prejudice.

The following extract justifies it.

He said. "You must struggle, rise. But in order to rise, you must raise the shadow with you. But you can never lift it to your level. The curse of the black race is God's curse. But the curse of the white race is black man who will be forever God's chosen one because He once cursed him" (191).

Christmas murdered Joanna until the moment when he mentions also that Christmas is black. From then on, the chase begins, as the context fits the stereotype mentioned above "She is a Yankee. Her folks come down here in the Reconstruction, to stir up the niggers. Two of them got killed doing it. They say she is still mixed up with niggers" (42). Christmas is associated with a stereotype. Using the razor, Christmas assumes the role which Joanna has tried to impose on him. Killing her with a weapon stereotypically associated with black crime, he fulfills her needs in a perverse way.

The whole social structure of the South is constructed in order to prevent Afro-Americans' financial emancipation. Christmas' attitude triggers aggression in people because at every stage of his life, he refuses to submit to anyone. Christmas expresses his disagreement with his position in the social hierarchy. He did not want to become a lower class worker at a plantation like the other negroes and lower class that wanted to earn much money he started in bootlegging.

Christmas' castration illustrates how the status quo of racial segregation is kept in the American South. Such methods are used by the Ku Klux Klan founded in 1886. It is the name of an organization that works to restore the supremacy of the south.

They castrate those blacks who rape white woman It effectively checks any attempts to integrate the two communities. In this novel Percy Grim (attorney of that place) cut his male reproduce part and says "Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell.'. Hightower delivers stillborn baby because his father is too afraid to ask a white woman for help to deliver Negro child.

Along with racial hatred, hatred on religious line is another factor which preserves existing social order. In other communities, it unites its followers. Here it is a tool with separate churches for each group. White people do not respect black's churches. Hines praying the superiority of the white race in black's temples is respected, because for black people God is white and blacks are cursed by God (mention in pg 21) as in the novel it mention many times "black curse of God almighty," (281) "God aint no nigger" (288).

Feelings of helplessness and powerlessness are the outcome of racial prejudice. Anger and Aggression is the constant target of prejudice. It is almost impossible to maintain a positive self-image in a society corrupted by racism.

The kid accuses the sheriff of being behind everything. He says that it should be him behind these bars. The judge leaves and the kid are released two days later. The kid finds a doctor. He asks him to remove the arrow that is still in his leg. It inflicts unendurable agony in him.

The sheriff watches as the dead body and tries to mete out justice. The man enters a town the next day and goes to the tavern for a drink. There, he runs into the judge. The old west was a place where there was little law and order and murder was an everyday occurrence. Murder is not only a happenstance of the lack of law and order. It is the business of the gang with which the kid finds himself attached.

The misguided origin applies in Joe such corrupting and corroding evil that he

cannot handle it. He is trapped in the vicious circle of his own vulnerability. Miss Burden tries her best to take out him from the cage of aggressive capitalism. But she is unsuccessful to achieve the purpose. Even though it was not have a punishable crime. But he seizes upon the chance to take away anything handy not only one time but frequently in the course of time. He wants to use the money he gets from the catastrophic spot to boost his standing and status. His approach to use dreadful memory is thoroughly destructive. It is the punishable act. But there is nobody to check his unrestrained passion for social recognition. As a result, he becomes the target of public doubt and racial hatred.

Joe is on the lookout for a moment in which he gives expression to his racial fury and receive acceptance by people in his surroundings. Joe is detached from family root and the root of his racial background as well as origin. It is reasonable to question whether people are adequately aware of the scope of his allusions. Although slave trading ceased in 1807, slavery as a social system persisted in Britain despite the sizeable number of anti-slavery controversies. Society accepts the system, and race theories accept racial discrimination. An understanding of the civilized status of black people exists to counter the compromising trend of British society which accepted slavery. The moral limitations of anti-slavery discourse are not exactly an ideological flaw but rather a matter of historical necessity.

Though only bondage and captivity lie in society, black in South do not hesitate to dream freedom. This activity is typically romantic in nature. In the hell of captivity, Burden gives continuity to racial tradition, culture and ritual. Though Joe's dream of liberation does not come true initially at the easy cost, she finally gets freedom. Freedom is the most precious thing all the black captives give almost value. Joe inwardly assume that only in the state of freedom, an individual freely gets a

chance to think who they are and what they are supposed to achieve in their lives.

Lives of black mulatto are devoid of dignity, security and self-esteem.

Traces of racism and racially motivated politics are the root cause of not only Joe but other members too. Friendship and emotional attachment can arise across race and culture. But the racial arrogance does not allow it to grow. There is true love and understanding people across culture, race and geography. When Lena Grove left her home to search for Brunch she was already pregnant. She met many people on her way who showed pity on her situation and helped her by giving her food. She got support of Byron Bunch to search for Brunch. At the end of the novel again both Lena and Byron along with her newborn baby searching for Brunch or Joe Brown met many people who helped them in their difficulties.

Racism is the sole cause of the disintegration of a possibility of upbringing. Racism is condemned and the Joe's tragic end is a good reminder. When the families fall apart due to racist mindset, they would suffer from psychological as well as emotional injury.

The question of dignity reflects romantic concern. Joe is devoid of dignity as he comes from divided racial origin. He comes across not social recognition but torturous denial. The legacy of racial dignity and assertiveness are accordingly passed to future family generations till Joe's narrative present. The narrative of Joe is simply an assertion that freedom from slavery is what brings meaning in their lives. This is because Joe's life marks the beginning of horror and servitude. Various counter assertions have been made that undermine acceptance of the literal truth of the story.

The core conclusion of this thesis is that racial relation in the South is badly affected by traces of racism. A white father goes to the extent of committing violence and bloodshed in order to keep pure racial lineage intact. This idea is examined

analytically in this study. The root cause of the failure of racial understanding and brotherhood is the deep-seated racial arrogance of the white. In Faulkner's *Light in August*, Joe's failure to flourish as an individual and his subsequent involvement in violence is twin evidences to assert how dreadful the effect of racism is.

From the white Southerners' angle, Afro-Americans are cursed by God. They are cursed because of their black color skin. Dark skin colour is associated with sin. The existing model of social structure in the American South is not favorable to the Blacks even long after the end of slavery. Joe is divided to the core. He believes that the black blood drove them first to the Negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there. It is the black blood which snatched up the pistol. The white blood wouldnot let him fire it. The white blood sends him to the minister for purgation. Joe moves from hither to thither. Aimlessly he searches from one pole of life to the other. Meeting no essence of life, he is thrown into misery and despair.

Social relations prevailing in the American South is badly affected by the existing traces of racism. They are invisible but ambiguous forces. These forces direct events in novel. The social pattern in *Light in August* is illustrated by the character who seems to be an oddball. Joe Christmas wants to get adapted to the society he lives in. But his inner weakness prevents him from doing so. His connection with a particular race is enforced by effective social stigma. Christmas does not fit into the existing model of the society. As a result, the relationship between social exclusion and suffering seem to be interrelated.

Man is a social being. He fully identifies himself with his immediate circle: family, neighbors and nation. But racial hatred and the horror of racism do not allow him to achieve this purpose. Consequently, he is doomed to suffer and sidetrack from the normal sphere of life. In the American South, the category of race is added. Race

determines the way of thinking, speaking and acting. People of uncertain origin could not be a part of the society where everyone had a well-defined place.

The notion 'separate but equal' is just the hoax to cheat Blacks. This notion is imposed by organization called Jim crow law. It became the back bone of the separation between black and white. The analysis of the protagonist's life shows that on every stage his rights have been violated. The perpetrator of violence does not suffer any consequences of his action, because his victims rejected social conventions. In the case of people of uncertain origin a gossip may lead to social exclusion. Finally, Christmas' portrays that African-Americans had no rights at all.

The main struggle of the protagonist is his conflict. Conflict arises from his attempt to know who he is and what he wants. The two factors are mutually exclusive. He beats a prostitute (a Negro women) because she is a symbol of the system which humiliates ordinary people like him. Christmas wants to be treated like a white man. But his uncertain origin makes him socially maladjusted. He is trying to find his way through racial division of the American South. He wants to assimilate with one of the existing communities. However, his attempt to be a part of a white society is doomed to failure.

Though racial discrimination lie in society, the blacks in the south do not hesitate to dream of Justice and freedom. It can be asserted that Faulkner become bridge between the world of blacks and whites. Though the medium of one of the character in this novel Faulkner is trying to upgrade the status of blacks in the white dominating society. He has tried to preserve the sense of dignity and equality in the psychic integrity of blacks which blacks had stared experiencing in the post Civil War era.

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