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VIOLENCE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *LIGHT IN AUGUST* (1932)

Abstract

By relying on Michel Foucault's theory of social discourse and power/knowledge where culture, customs and other elements of society are seen as the source of shared knowledge imposed on the individuals, this paper explores the theme of violence in William Faulkner's novel *Light in August* (1932) to prove Joe Christmas' violence as the result of his exposure to the social discourse of the time he lives in, namely the South during the Jim Crow era. The paper proves violence in the novel as mostly connected to the character of Joe Christmas and explores why Joe Christmas, even though the main enactor of violence, is not regarded as a villain but as an anti-hero. The period in which Christmas lives is the Jim Crow South where blackness was regarded as inferior, negative and evil which affects Joe's self-perception and his actions. Joe, the captive of society, exhibits violence because the only thing he has been thought is to respond with violence. The paper will analyze several parts of the novel connected to Joe Christmas and violence to prove how violence in Faulkner's novel does not exist per se but serves to prove how damaging the effect of society and social discourse can be.

Keywords: Michel Foucault; William Faulkner; Joe Christmas; violence; social discourse; power/knowledge

When observing William Faulkner's oeuvre one can notice that "violence and its ramifications seem to have occupied him so much that they warrant a rereading of his oeuvre in terms of this topic" (Hönnighausen, 2007, 236). John L. Longley, Jr. explains human need for exploring violence: "We love the violence and evil because we acquiesce in them… when there are guilt and filth in the human psyche, the only possible remedy is to cast them out" (1957, 248) and it is exactly what Faulkner does in his major works such as *Light in August* (1932), *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Sanctuary* (1931) which all deal with the issue of violence to a greater or lesser extent. This paper will concentrate on the issue of violence in *Light in August* (1932) to showcase that violence in Faulkner's novel is not sensationalistic and does not exist per se – its function is more complicated. In *Light in August* (1932), violence revolves around the character of Joe Christmas. Joe Christmas is a violent man – every period of his life is tainted by some form of violence (his birth, his childhood, his adolescence, and his youth), however, this paper will explore how the cause of that violence is created by society and social discourse. Joe is the main enactor of violence; however, Joe is also constantly subjected to different forms of violence by other people, namely the white people. The paper will show how Joe, despite all of his wrongdoings and violence, is not considered a villain but a modern anti-hero as Faulkner reveals society (the Jim Crow South) as the main villain whose victim is Joe. To the Jim Crow South miscegenation is a "threatening possibility" (Friday, 2000/2001, 43) and a crisis which needs to be solved by the community which desperately tries to position Joe as a black man but to Joe the answer to the question of his race does not come easily – he fails to choose between black and white race and in this way "does more damage than any choice he could make" (Friday, 2000/2001, 52). The Jim Crow South forces Joe to be someone he is not thus affecting his psyche – "the psychotic subject remains rooted in a 'captation...by the situation' (E, 99/ 7), essentially unable to frame an identity of any sort distinct from that of the environment that envelops him" (Lee 21 qtd. in Novak, 2011, 149) and making

him a tragic anti-hero who does not know who he is nor where he belongs and is unable to form any meaningful relationship with anyone.

Longley defines a hero as someone who "must typify the major myths and problems of our century. In a cosmos where all is chaos and all standards have disappeared, he will very likely be destroyed as a result of his failure to define himself correctly in relation to that cosmos. Lastly he must embody the perpetual human constants which are the property of any age" (1957, 235). One can apply these criteria to Joe Christmas – his character typifies the problems of society and he must be destroyed since he fails to define himself correctly in relation to cosmos. Furthermore, according to "traditional, classic tragic criteria" (Longley, 1957, 235), a hero should be noble, "illustrious in rank and fortune" (Longley, 1957, 235) and "free to choose and free to act or not act" (Longley, 1957, 235). Joe Christmas is not noble nor "illustrious in rank and fortune" (Longley, 1957, 235), but he insists on having freedom to be who he wants to be which makes him an anti-hero, but which is also the major source of his violence: "because he is free, he cannot let others tell him how and what to be" (Longley, 1957, 239).

Philip Weinstein remarks that "there is no body in Faulkner's work more patiently depicted, none more variously abused, than Joe Christmas'" (qtd. in Friday, 2000/2001, 55). Joe Christmas is abused by Hines, McEachern, Bobbie's customer, the mob in Mottstown, Percy Grimm, but he also enacts violence on others: an unnamed black girl, Bobbie, McEachern, Joanna Burden, and random people he meets. This violence is often "an expression of identity crisis" (Friday, 2000/2001, 55), but it is also "a futile act of insistence, a means of subtending racial and sexual identities that are temporally invariant" (Friday, 2000/2001, 56); whereas Joe does not know if he is black or white, he can always resort to violence to prove he is a man: when he resorts to these violent acts, especially against women, by assaulting the Other, he is saved from becoming that Other.

The violence that Joe exhibits stems from the other characters' attempts to define Joe and exhibit control over him: "This kind of societal control over ideas of personhood, exemplified by the 'racial hierarchy'

of the Southern United States, lies at the heart of *Light in August*, which illustrates the Southern community's effects on Christmas and, in turn, Christmas's effects on the Southern community" (Seri, 2014, "Exploring Reciprocity in Faulkner's *Light in August*"). Joe's race is never clearly stated in the novel, yet Joe suspects he is black and everyone around him tries to force this blackness onto him; "Faulkner's portrait of Joe reflects cultural fears rooted in a 'one drop,' pseudo-biological conception of race" (Friday, 2000/2001, 44). There is a possibility that Joe is a "white nigger" – a "product of white anxiety and the contemporary race theories prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s – the height of Jim Crow and the historical and ideological context of the novel" (Friday, 2000/2001, 44). Before the turn of the century, most states considered a person as black if he or she were one-eighth black or more. Between 1910 and 1930, the boundary was expanded to include even those who were 1/32nd part black (Roberts, 1994, 130) and being black meant being inferior: "In the early years of the twentieth century, it was becoming clear that the Negro would be effectively disfranchised throughout the South, that he would be firmly relegated to the lower rungs of the economic ladder, and that neither equality nor aspirations for equality in any department of life were for him." (Woodward, 2002, 23) Segregation extended to all forms of public transportation, to sports and recreations, to hospitals, orphanages, prisons, asylums, cemeteries, and so on. It was clear that South will "remain a white man's country" (Phillips qtd. in Woodward, 2002, 23-4). In this period whiteness moved from "being a passive characteristic as an aspect of identity to an active entity that – like other types of property – is used to fulfill the will and to exercise power" (Harris, 1993, 1734). Whiteness was protected by law and it became "an object or resource necessary to be a person" (Radin qtd. in Harris, 1993, 1734). Being white was a thing of significant value: "The direct manifestation of the law's legitimation of whiteness as reputation is revealed in the well-established doctrine that to call a white person 'Black' is to defame her" (Harris, 1993, 1735). This whiteness was threatened at the beginning of the 20th century by historical changes which placed "whiteness under erasure" (Friday, 2000/2001, 50). The emancipation of black men and

white women "endangered, too seriously to ignore, the social and cognitive structures organizing Southern life" (Matthews, 2009, 159). The migration from the South to the North and labor shortage meant that the term "negro" became economically defined – poor whites could easily be defined as blacks by occupying certain socio-economic position of blacks thus it was necessary to vigilantly guide the boundaries between the two races. For Faulkner's South "the possibility of miscegenation is more traumatic than the existence of miscegenation itself" (Sandquist qtd. in Friday, 2000/2001, 50). This anxiety informs the character of Joe Christmas and is connected to the violence that surrounds Christmas.

First acts of violence connected to Christmas appear immediately after his birth when Christmas' grandfather Doc Hines kills Christmas' father simply because he was allegedly black and puts Christmas in the orphanage. Left without family, Joe becomes the captive of his grandfather Doc Hines who controls not only Joe's self-perception but Joe's destiny too. Doc Hines vigilantly observes every Christmas' move believing he is "devil's walking seed" (Faulkner, 1972, 155) and creates a social barrier between Joe and other children. Hines' behavior can only be explained when the social discourse of the time is taken into account and therefore it is necessary to consult Michel Foucault's theory of discourse in order to understand Joe's position. Foucault defines social discourse as

> ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 108 qtd. in Pinkus, 1996, "Foucault").

The social discourse of the Jim Crow South constantly tries to teach Joe that he is black and therefore inferior, less worthy, negative, violent and evil. It is Doc Hines who first plants these ideas into Joe's mind by suggesting that Joe is black and thus affecting his mind and emotional life. One can see that Joe is not inherently violent or evil; he is an

innocent child with no racial knowledge whatsoever until Doc Hines plants the ideas of his black ancestry into his head. The knowledge that Doc Hines possesses is the shared knowledge about black race. This knowledge is connected to power; those in power create and share this implicit knowledge. In his work, Michel Foucault concentrates on the composite term, "power/knowledge:"

> Foucault is interested in investigating how a particular kind of implicit knowledge – the *savoir* – permeating a historical period, that is, the understanding that counts as the "common sense" of that time/place/people, shapes the explicit knowledge the *connaissance* that is institutionalized in the disciplines that make up the human sciences, including natural (e.g. biology) or social (e. g. psychology) science (Foucault 1972: 182-3). (Feder, 2011, 55)

These social codes created by the community need to be obtained by all means. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault describes this oppressive potency by using the concept of the Panopticon (Feder, 2011, 58). The Panopticon is a building plan with an "observation tower" at its center from where subjects are watched by the observer who supervises if they exhibit the acceptable behavior. This observer is invisible to the subject thus the subject constantly feels like he is watched by someone and feels pressured to exhibit the desirable behavior. The objective is that those who are observed internalize this "authoritative gaze" (Feder, 2011, 58) and accept the watcher as someone who contains the absolute power which is evident in *Light in August* (1932) as well. Karlianne Seri explains it:

> In *Light in August,* Southern society acts as this "invisible eye," with Christmas as its "subject," by working through the voices of Jefferson, especially those that shape Christmas's upbringing and govern the ideological patterns through which his idea of self takes shape. For example, Christmas's awareness of Doc Hines's constant gaze marks his first step in realizing his "otherness." ("Exploring Reciprocity in Faulkner's *Light in August*)

Christmas feels that he is constantly watched which makes him perceive his "otherness:"

> he knew that he was never on the playground for an instant that the man was not watching him from the chair in the furnace room door, with a profound and unflagging attention. If the child had been older he would perhaps have thought . . . *That is why I am different from the others: because he is watching me all the time.* (Faulkner, 1972, 138)

It is "the act of observation itself that creates the racial identity" (Friday, 2000/2001, 49).

Besides Doc Hines who plants the idea of blackness which is in social discourse presented as something terrible, another character that ascribes Joe attributes that he does not have and affects the course of Joe's life is the dietitian at the orphanage. Christmas, a five-year-old child who sneaks into the dietitian's room to eat her toothpaste, is ascribed by her the characteristics of the adult when he accidentally hears the dietitian having sexual intercourse with her boyfriend. When the dietitian yells: "Tell, then! You little nigger bastard!" (Faulkner, 1972, 53) she "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" (Booker Winkleblack, 1976, 10). Joe has no idea why he is scolded, but he knows that the dietitian links blackness and badness and that "he would not only be removed; he would be punished for having given her terror and worry" (Faulkner, 1972, 60). Krister Friday sees this incident as a major incident which defined Christmas' life and led to Christmas' future violence. She explains that "what Christmas will do to Joanna Burden can be glimpsed by his treatment as a child and boy. Implicitly, the origins of Christmas's adult crime become quickly conflated with questions surrounding Christmas's racial heritage" (Friday, 2000/2001, 48).

The dietitian's accusations regarding Joe's race lead to Joe being quickly adopted by a family with a violent foster father. Life with the McEacherns does not help Joe with his identity crisis – Joe needs

someone who would serve "as a guide in the relearning of the very first steps toward an intimate mutuality, and a legitimate repudiation" (Erikson qtd. in Sandstrom 212), but McEachern is not capable of this. He offers only punishment and violence thus detaching Christmas from himself and his emotions even more. During the beatings both Joe's and his foster father's face is calm; both have accepted violence as something "normal:" "McEachern began to strike methodically, with slow and deliberate force, still without heat or anger. It would have been hard to say which face was more rapt, more calm, more convinced" (Faulkner, 1972, 69). During his life with the McEacherns, Christmas gets so accustomed to violence that he believes violence is the only thing he deserves thus he feels awkward and incapable to respond to Mrs. McEachern's rare acts of kindness:

> It was not the hard work which he hated, nor the punishment and injustice. He was used to that before he ever saw either of them. He expected no less, and so he was neither outraged nor surprised. 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. 'She is trying to make me cry,' he thought, lying cold and rigid in his bed, his hands beneath his head and the moonlight falling across his body, hearing the steady murmur of the man's voice as it mounted the stairway on its first heavenward stage; 'She was trying to make me cry. Then she thinks that they would have had me." (Faulkner, 1972, 70)

Joe cannot accept anyone's kindness because it would only make him softer and unable to survive in the Jim Crow South which does not tolerate people like him.

Life with the McEacherns teaches Joe that violence is the solution to everything, especially to his feelings of self-doubt regarding his race. As a teenager, Joe and his friends arrange to have a black prostitute for them but having her there raises the question of Joe's race planted in him by Doc Hines. When confronted with her race and femininity, Joe, uncomfortable with both of those things, reacts with the only thing he has learned so far – with violence. Angry at his own possible blackness and afraid of women, Joe beats prostitute up:

> His turn came. He entered the shed. It was dark. At once he was overcome by a terrible haste. There was something in him trying to get out, like when he had used to think of toothpaste. But he could not move at once, standing there, smelling the woman, smelling the negro all at once; enclosed by the womanshenegro and the haste, driven, having to wait until she spoke: a guiding sound that was no particular word and completely unaware… He was moving, because his foot touched her. Then it touched her again because he kicked her. He kicked her hard, kicking into and through a choked wail of surprise and fear. (Faulkner, 1972, 66)

At first, Joe's reaction to the prostitute seems illogical but when inspected closer it is clear how Joe's reaction is again that of a captive: when in the shed, there is "something in him trying to get out" (Faulkner, 1972, 66). At that moment Joe remembers the incident with the toothpaste when he was falsely accused by the dietitian of something he had not done and denoted as black who, in social discourse, is perceived as bad. Upon entering the shed, Joe feels trapped "like when he had used to think of toothpaste" (Faulkner, 1972, 72) thus revealing how "various details in the present conspire to revive the traumas of his early childhood" (Spenko, 1982, 260). The toothpaste incident for Joe means two things: it is connected to women and their sexuality (the dietitian's sexual incident) and to his race (the dietitian calls Joe "nigger bastard" (Faulkner, 1972, 53) where she connects blackness and badness). Due to this negative experience, both, women and blackness for Joe are a horrendous thing and, in his mind, blended in one word: "the womanshenegro" (Faulkner, 1972, 66) – "a fusion of words that conflates two violated groups: both 'woman' and 'negro' are 'she' to the power exerted by white males" (Matthews, 2009, 164). Joe feels that he has to beat the prostitute to separate himself from both women and blackness.

Incident with the prostitute is not a single act of violence connected to Joe but he keeps getting involved into violent acts as the plot moves forward. When he meets Bobbie Allen, it seems that Joe feels able to move on. Whereas Bobbie is street smart, Faulkner once again reveals Joe's humanity as Joe is shown as almost childlike and even naïve for not suspecting Bobbie is a prostitute. He is clutching the dime that McEachern gave him and in that way resembles a child: "He carried the dime

clutched hot and small in his palm as a child might. He entered the screen door, clumsily, stumbling a little." (Faulkner, 1972, 72) He falls in love with Bobbie – she is the first woman he has ever been with; he confides in her, runs for miles to meet her, and woos her by bringing her a box of chocolate. However, Joe once again resorts to violence when he finds out that Bobbie is a prostitute:

> He struck her, without warning, feeling her flesh. He knew then what even yet he had not believed. "Oh," she cried. He struck her again. "Not here!" she whispered. "Not here!" Then he found that she was crying. He had not cried since he could remember. He cried, cursing her, striking her. Then she was holding him. Even the reason for striking her was gone then. "Now, now," she said. "Now, now." (Faulkner, 1972, 82)

Joe continues his relationship with Bobbie which leads to the event that will mark his life – while at a dance with Bobbie, Joe in defense supposedly kills his foster father. Joe innocently believes that Bobbie will run away with him, but Bobbie reveals her real face and abandons him. Moreover, her gang beats Joe up, but it is not the beating that hurts Joe – Joe feels numb when he realizes how little he means to Bobbie:

> Perhaps he did not feel either blow, though the stranger struck him twice in the face before he reached the floor, where like the man whom he had struck down, he lay upon his back, quite still. But he was not out because his eyes were still open, looking quietly up at them. There was nothing in his eyes at all, no pain, no surprise. But apparently he could not move; he just lay there with a profoundly contemplative expression, looking quietly up at the two men, and the blonde woman still as immobile and completely finished and surfaced as a cast statue. Perhaps he could not hear the voices either, or perhaps he did and they once more had no more significance than the dry buzzing of the steady insects beyond the window. (Faulkner, 1972, 89)

The scene of Joe being beaten up is tragic and important not only because of the physical violence to which Joe is subjected, but also because of Bobbie's abandonment. The shock and abandonment that Joe experiences leads to Joe's diffusion of identity (Sandstrom, 1967, 209) explained by Eric Erikson, a psychologist with social and cultural

interests, as a "state of acute identity diffusion [which] usually becomes manifest when the young individual finds himself exposed to a combination of experiences which demand his simultaneous commitment to *physical intimacy* (not by any means always overtly sexual), to decisive *occupational choice,* to energetic *competition*, and to *psychosocial self-definition.*" (qtd. in Sandstrom, 1967, 209) This identity crisis often happens when an individual is between sixteen and twenty-four years old which is the case with Christmas who goes through this crisis after the brawl with McEachern and Bobbie's abandonment. Joe does not feel capable to solve this identity crisis and he avoids the "identity-choice" (Sandstrom, 1967, 209) for fifteen years thus "extending their moratoria, in an unhealthy manner" (Sandstrom, 1967, 210). Erikson explains that "avoidance of choices… leads to a sense of outer isolation" (Sandstrom, 1967, 210) which is evident in Joe's further behavior – left in this state of diffusion of identity and enwrapped in loneliness, he ends up on the road.

Joe roams the streets for fifteen years, and by the time he arrives in Jefferson he is looking "rootless" (Matthews, 2009, 166). His identity "that only make[s] sense in relation to another subject – an 'other'" (Homer qtd. in Novak, 2011, 144) has not been formed and Joe is unable to connect to anyone. He will try it once again though – in Jefferson he finds something similar to home when he gets involved with Joanna, but "his stay only reinforces Joe's conviction that homes are the factories where stereotypes are reproduced" (Matthews, 2009, 166). Through the social discourse Joanna tries to turn Joe into someone he is not. Joanna, sexually attracted to Joe's possible blackness, screams "Negro! Negro! Negro!" (Faulkner, 1972, 106) during their sexual intercourses and ascribes to Joe the quality of blackness which he outwardly does not possess:

> An object of communal hatred herself, however, Joanna turns the reproduction of social truth inside out, exposing stereotype as collective fantasy, an artifice of prohibitions meant to preserve the status quo. Joanna insists on rendering Southern phobias actual: she casts Christmas as the

> "black beast rapist" and herself as the ravished virgin secretly lusting after a negro lover. (Matthews, 2009, 166)

Again, one can see a pair where Joe is less corrupted of the two: "Within six months she was completely corrupted. It could not be said that he corrupted her. His own life, for all its anonymous promiscuity, had been conventional enough, as a life of healthy and normal sin usually is." (Faulkner, 1972, 106) Furthermore, Joe even becomes afraid of her and her madness: "He began now to be afraid, whose feeling up to now had been bewilderment and perhaps foreboding and fatality." (Faulkner, 1972, 110) The situation with Joanna becomes unbearable and Joe's feeling of being trapped increases and escalates to the point where he feels he cannot hold it anymore: "He stood in the door, his hand still on the knob, quite motionless. It seemed to him that he could actually hear the words inside him: *You should have read that note. You should have read that note* thinking, 'I am going to do something. Going to do something.'" (Faulkner, 1972, 112) Joanna pushes Joe towards violence when she enforces him to change his life and categorizes Joe as black by offering him to go to the college for black people:

> "To school," his mouth said. "A nigger school. Me."
> . . .
> "Tell them," she said.
> "Tell niggers that I am a nigger too?" She now looked at him. Her face was quite calm. It was the face of an old woman now.
> "Yes. You'll have to do that. So they won't charge you anything. On my account."
> Then it was as if he said suddenly to his mouth: 'Shut up. Shut up that drivel. Let me talk.' (Faulkner, 1972, 112 – 113)

As Joanna proceeds with her attempts to change Joe, it is evident that Joe will not be capable to tolerate it any longer: "He was saying to himself *I had to do it* already in the past tense; *I had to do it. She said so herself*." (Faulkner, 1972, 114)

During their last encounter one can see that Joanna is everything but a victim:

> "Will you kneel with me?" she said. "I don't ask it."
> "No," he said.
> "I don't ask it. It's not I who ask it. Kneel with me."
> "No."
> 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 as long and heavier than a small rifle. (Faulkner, 1972, 115)

Joanna pressures Joe into praying and kneeling with her which he refuses three times thus echoing McEachern's enforcing of religion on Christmas. The situation culminates when Joe sees that she is holding the rifle to which he responds with violence. Social discourse of the Jim Crow South where being black means being less than a person thought Joe to deny blackness in him thus to Joanna's attempts to make a black man out of him Joe reacts with violence. Just as the rest of the people Joe interacts with, Joanna Burden also tries to define Christmas according to her vision of who he must be, and Joe does not allow it: "He well insist on his right to simply be; he has defined himself and has fought hard for the definition. The murder of Joanna Burden and his own death are the fruit of that insistence." (Longley, 1957, 240) Joe's identity is so weak that he cannot allow Joanna to threaten it: "Joe seems to react toward McEachern and especially Miss Burden with this same resistance, rooted in a fear that the outer force 'may carelessly or deliberately destroy the weak core of the patient's identity and impose instead his own'" (Sandstrom, 1967, 218). After a period of life in Jefferson with Joanna, it would become clear that Christmas was gone too far in his mental decline to be able to live any sort of a normal life. This decline would reach a pinnacle when he murders Joanna: "Rejected, feared, hated; he has sought and been proud of that rejection and fear; but pushed too far he has gone too far, and unable to reconcile conflicting responsibility, he has committed a brutal murder" (Longley, 1957, 242). The rest of his life he would no longer be running toward the answer to his identity crisis but he would turn into running away from what he had done. When

Joe Brown, Christmas' former coworker, friend, and business partner, gets arrested, he puts the blame on Christmas and reveals his supposed blackness. As Biljana Oklopcic explains:

> Joe Christmas' "blackness" is created by the collective power of suggestion, the word of mouth, rumour, and gossip that circulate around the white members of the Jefferson community: from Joe Brown's "Go on. Accuse me. Accuse the white man that's trying to help you with what he knows. Accuse the white man and let the nigger go free. Accuse the white and let the nigger run" (Faulkner, LA 75) to Sheriff Watt's "Get me a nigger" (Faulkner, LA 218). (Oklopcic, 2014, 29)

Brown's words regarding Joe's blackness are enough to immediately invoke the social discourse of black as violent and bad, and for his blackness Joe has to suffer in the most brutal way. When people find Joanna murdered, they "believed aloud that it was an anonymous negro crime committed not by a negro but by Negro and who knew, believed, and hoped that she had been ravished too: at least once before her throat was cut and at least once afterward" (Faulkner, 1972, 127) revealing the need to maintain the knowledge/power of the Jim Crow South regarding the whiteness and blackness. In this way Faulkner reveals the stereotype of the black men invented to punish them even when they are not guilty: "The town folks' collective fantasy punishes Joanna sexually for her willingness to mix racially… We may begin to see how motives of racial and sexual containment interlock in the single stereotype of white female chastity menaced by negro lust." (Matthews, 2009, 163-4)

The violence that followed Christmas around his entire life catches up with him which can be seen when the novel cuts from his last encounter with Joanna straight to a scene of him running away by car. While on the run, he makes a relevant remark: "I have been further in these seven days than in all the thirty years… But I have never got outside that circle. I have never broken out of the ring of what I have already done and cannot ever undo" (Faulkner, 1972, 137). In the last part of this statement, one can see his regret, even though somewhat faint, and another glimpse of his humanity. It seems that Christmas cannot

escape what the Jim Crow South has prepared for him in the form of Percy Grimm. Even in death, violence to which Joe is subjected is abnormal as Percy Grimm not only kills Christmas but also performs something extremely violent – he castrates Christmas thus taking revenge for Joe's alleged rape and murder of Joanna Burden. When Joe dies, we feel with him "because he is the modern Everyman… His suffering far transcends the time and place and means Faulkner has used, and comes to stand for everything that is grave and constant in the human condition" (Longley, 1957, 248). Joe is the character who is feared and hated, yet Faulkner managed to extend "our sympathies beyond their ordinary limits" (Spenko, 1982, 266) which reveals Faulkner's genius as a writer.

Despite Joe's character and his actions, Joe's story can still be seen as incredibly tragic, as his childhood and upbringing which were fueled by the social discourse of black as negative played a major role in what kind of a man he would grow up to be. From his early life, Joe lacks the sense of his identity. Identity "connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (Erikson qtd. in Sandstrom 208) and Joe struggles with both of these things. Joe commits various crimes, yet it is undeniable that his difficult personality and tendency for violence is not entirely self-developed but is rather a result of being constantly exposed to violent environments and questions regarding his race that he had developed under the influence of the Jim Crow South. Throughout the novel Joe feels trapped – he does not know for sure what his race is, but society constantly tries to define him as black. The Jim Crow South possesses shared knowledge of blackness as negative, and Joe internalizes this knowledge which means he must escape blackness by all means. He looks like a white man and does not know his race which results in an identity crisis which must be resolved; at some points he tries to live as a black man, and at some points he tries to live as a white man. Due to this unfortunate position, one can regard Joe Christmas as an antihero as Joe simply wants to have freedom to be who he wants to be. At the beginning of the novel Joe is portrayed as a mysterious, closed man – an inscrutable character that can be easily hated. His brutality and

the murder of Joanna define him as a cold brute and a murderer who brings violence wherever he arrives, but when Faulkner reveals Joe's childhood, upbringing, and his death, Joe's actions seem clearer if not understandable. The Jim Crow South that works through the words and actions of Doc Hines, McEachern, Joanna Burden, and Percy Grimm among others insist on labeling Joe according to their social discourse: Doc Hines calls Christmas "devil's walking seed" (Faulkner, 1972, 155), children at the orphanage call Christmas "nigger," the dietitian yells "nigger bastard!" (Faulkner, 1972, 53), Joanna Burden screams "Negro! Negro! Negro!" (Faulkner, 1972, 106), Joe Brown says "Accuse the white and let the nigger run" (Faulkner, 1972, 46), and Percy Grimm says "Now you'll let white women alone" (Faulkner, 1972, 203). They all see and denote white-looking Christmas as black. In this way Faulkner reveals how damaging the social discourse in forming one's identity can be. To choose either black or white, Joe needs to damage himself – if he chooses blackness, he must face an extreme devaluation under racism; and if he chooses whiteness, he feels like he is missing the blackness. This strain under which Joe lives culminates with him murdering Joanna – the crime for which he is brutally punished.

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NASILJE U ROMANU *SVJETLOST U KOLOVOZU* (1932.) WILLIAMA FAULKNERA

Sažetak

Oslanjajući se na teoriju Michela Foucaulta o diskursu te njegovu proučavanju pojma moć/znanje gdje se kultura, običaji i ostali elementi društva vide kao prenositelji zajedničkoga znanja koje se nameće pojedincima, ovaj rad istražuje roman *Svjetlost u kolovozu* (1932) Williama Faulknera kako bi pokazao da je nasilje Joea Christmasa rezultat njegove izloženosti diskursu društva u kojemu živi, a to je Jug SAD-a iz doba Jima Crowa. Rad će prikazati kako je nasilje u romanu u najvećoj mjeri povezano s likom Joea Christmasa te istražiti kako on, iako glavni tvorac nasilja u romanu, nije protumačen kao zlikovac nego kao antijunak. Razdoblje u kojemu Christmas živi jest razdoblje kada je biti pripadnik crne rase značilo biti viđen kao inferioran, loš i zao, što je utjecalo na Joeovo viđenje samoga sebe kao i na njegove negativne postupke. Joe, koji je zapravo zatočenik društva, pokazuje nasilje samo zato što je naučen da je ono jedini odgovor. Rad će analizirati nekoliko dijelova romana u kojima se vidi Joeova povezanost s nasiljem kako bi dokazao da ono u Faulknerovu romanu ne postoji bez nekoga cilja niti je senzacionalističke naravi, nego služi kako bi pokazalo koliko može biti štetan utjecaj društva i društvenoga diskursa.

Ključne riječi: Michel Foucault; William Faulkner; Joe Christmas; nasilje; diskurs; teorija moći