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The black, white, and individual mulatto: Faulkner's major and minor mulatto characters

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The black, white, and individual mulatto: Faulkner's major and minor mulatto characters

by

Marilyn Brandt Gerdeen

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

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I. INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner's treatment of the mulatto in his short stories and novels is essentially a sympathetic one. This sympathy manifests itself especially in his treatment of mulattoes who pass for white, but whose psychological needs and backgrounds force them eventually to acknowledge their blackness. Many Faulkner critics, notably Charles Peavy and Charles Nilon, have centered on Faulkner's treatment of the Negro's adjustment to the society around him, but no one has published a study on Faulkner's mulatto as an individual who usually feels alienated in direct proportion to the lightness of his skin, that is, to his ability to pass for white. Faulkner thinks that the lighter the mulatto's skin, the more he will experience feelings of rejection.

The definition of mulatto varies apparently from area to area and even from person to person. According to W. T. Couch and Charles Nilon, anyone with one-eighth or more Negro blood is classed as a Negro; in others, the law prescribes that any trace of Negro blood no matter how remote automatically classes one as Negro. Tischler says, "The possession of Caucasian blood supposedly makes this character the superior of the darker Negro and one with whom the white readers can sympathize." Faulkner has what might be called a typically Southern view, that a mulatto is anyone with a trace of Negro blood.

In both the major and minor characters, Faulkner's characterization is largely dependent upon the degree of blackness.
For this reason, it will be convenient to deal first with Faulkner's minor mulatto characters, regardless of their skin color. Faulkner's major mulatto characters, whom I will discuss in detail, will be divided into three categories: (a) mulattoes who accept themselves as Negroid because they are usually dark enough so that they never have to contend with the problem of passing for white, exemplified by Clytie Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Ned McCaslin in *The Reivers*; (b) mulattoes, light-skinned enough to pass for white, who consequently become preoccupied with the taint of their black blood and are confronted with the tragic problem of miscegenation, exemplified by Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Joe Christmas in *Light in August*; (c) the mulatto who refuses to conform to the Negro stereotype that white society has imposed upon him. He is not white or black, but insists upon being considered as an individual. This is exemplified by Lucas Beauchamp in "The Fire and the Hearth" and *Intruder in the Dust*.

This study is an essential one because practically all of Faulkner's short stories and novels have either black or mulatto characters in both major and minor roles.
II. FAULKNER'S MINOR MULATTO CHARACTERS

The majority of Faulkner's minor mulatto characters accept their black status because they have no choice. They are physically unable to pass for white. Because of this, they marry Negroes, live in Negro quarters, and speak and dress as Negroes do. Faulkner uses Negro stereotypes and then works variations upon them, an indication of his genius. One of the best examples of Faulkner's genius in characterization is Dilsey, the black cook in The Sound and the Fury. She has all the qualities of the faithful, loyal servant stereotype, but by the end of the novel, Faulkner has managed to make of her an individualized character.

Silberman and Tischler, white social commentators, describe two Southern white stereotypes of the Negro: "'Negroes are docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble, but given to lying and stealing—in short, carefree, happy-go-lucky, amoral dependent children, albeit children with a powerful sex drive and a lot of rhythm.'"5 "Physically, he is strong but unattractive and virtually sexless, mentally and morally, he is clearly inferior to whites."6 Obviously, these quotations indicate that Negro stereotypes are not absolute. The first quote suggests a black rapist, while the second one suggests a mild black Sambo.

BoBo Beauchamp, a minor mulatto character in The Reivers, resembles Ned McCaslin, a major character discussed in the
next chapter. In many ways, BoBo conforms to the above stereotypes. Accepting his blackness, he has huge gambling debts, and is irresponsible in that he, in Ned's words, gives "'up Mississippi cotton farming and take[s] up Memphis frolicking and gambling for a living in place of it."'7 BoBo persuades his cousin, Ned, to help him meet his gambling obligations and Ned arranges for the car-horse trade and race, providing the main conflict and adventure of the novel.

The short story collection Go Down, Moses includes many minor characters of mixed blood. Tomey's Turl, the son of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin by his slave daughter, accepts his blackness by courting and eventually marrying Tennie, a Negro owned by Hubert Beauchamp. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy stereotype him as an irresponsible, happy-go-lucky troublemaker because he constantly runs off to see Tennie. Faulkner's sympathetic attitude toward Tomey's Turl becomes especially obvious when he includes the incident in which Tomey's Turl accidentally knocks down his white pursuer, Uncle Buddy. In Southern society, this is a capital offense. However, Faulkner is not the bigoted individual who would be outraged. In his story, it is a comic interlude, primarily intended to be humorous. Later, when Tomey's Turl rejects the inheritance from his father, L. Q. C. McCaslin, he steps outside of the greedy, amoral stereotype by asserting his individuality.

Tomey's Turl and Tennie have three children: James
(Tennie's Jim), Sophonsiba, and Lucas. Lucas, as a major character, will be examined later.

Like his father, Tomey's Turl, James Beauchamp ignores a thousand dollar inheritance and disappears on his twenty-first birthday. One possible reason for this is that James rejects the blood money which never can be a substitute for his grandfather's love and respect. Isaac McCaslin, who has the same grandfather as Tennie's Jim, and who is possibly Faulkner's voice in the story, believes that it is a simple matter of Jim's not knowing what money is. There is a possibility that Isaac is Faulkner's voice here because Isaac is obviously a sympathetic character and usually we are supposed to agree with him. However, Isaac cannot totally speak for Faulkner, I think, because Ike is a fictional character with the stain of his family's guilt pressing upon him.

Tennie's Jim's sister, Sophonsiba, marries a supposedly intellectual Negro. Faulkner implies that the supposed intellectuality of the Negro is a pretense because he wears lensless eye glasses. Carrying the heavy guilt for his grandfather's actions, Ike traces her to Arkansas so that he may give her the thousand dollar legacy. He finds them living in utter poverty:

. . . she did not even seem to breathe or to be alive except her eyes watching him; when he took a step toward her it was still not movement because she could have retreated no further: only the tremendous fathomless ink-colored eyes in the narrow, thin, too thin coffee-colored face watching him without alarm, without recognition, without hope. "Fonsiba," he said.
"Fonsiba. Are you all right?" "I'm free," she said (280).

Sophonsiba is probably representative of Faulkner's belief that mulattoes and Negroes have been consistently victimized but, in Isaac's words, they "... will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are" (294).

There are dark-skinned mulattoes who feel just as alienated from and upset with society as the light-skinned mulattoes who attempt to pass for white. One of the last of the Beauchamps, Samuel Worsham (Butch) Beauchamp, has little white blood in him. He is symbolic of the black who rebels against the demands of white society and, like Richard Wright's character from Native Son, Bigger Thomas, finds meaning in life through the murder of whites. In Samuel's case, this vocation is gambling. Although Samuel never attempts to pass for white, he is not willing to accept the Negro role of poverty and humility. Convicted of murdering a white policeman, Samuel is executed and his body is returned to Jefferson for burial. Both Bigger Thomas and Samuel Beauchamp are examples of blacks who are so full of hate for white society that all they want is a way to injure whites. In spasms of hatred and fear, Bigger and Samuel murder their white victims. They never really regret their actions.

Samuel W. Beauchamp himself seems to imply that the Negro, shut out of the acceptable society will develop an affinity for crime and the underworld where he can be accepted for his skill and lack of moral impediments.
Samuel's case may appear to be an exception to my paper's major premise, but I think not. Faulkner's concern in this story is not primarily with the tragedy of Butch. Rather, Faulkner places the emphasis on Molly Beauchamp's maneuverings to get enough money to have Samuel's body returned to Jefferson. The reader senses, however, that Faulkner pities mulattoes like Samuel Beauchamp who never have had a chance to pull themselves out of the vicious circle of poverty and crime imposed by white society.

In the next example, from the short story "Delta Autumn," an unnamed girl also becomes a victim of white society. It seems as if she, too, never is given a chance because of her black blood.

A victim of another McCaslin descendant, Roth Edmonds, she is educated and white skinned, but Roth rejects her and their illegitimate child because she is the granddaughter of Tennie's Jim and, therefore, has a small percentage of Negro blood. Although she doesn't expect Roth to marry her, she has come to the hunting camp to be with the man she loves. Old Ike stays in camp and receives the girl in his tent, giving her Roth's simple message: "No." Ike suspects that she has Negro blood only when she mentions that her mother takes in washing. Horrified, Ike urges:

"Marry a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you--for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white... Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he
ever existed" (363).

"'Old man,' she said, 'have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?'" (363) The miscegenation tragedy is culminated here in that two young people in love are denied a normal husband-wife relationship because of prejudice against black blood.

Many of Faulkner's mulattoes encounter tragedy in love because their white lovers cannot transcend their ingrained prejudices.

Ike, who very probably speaks for Faulkner in this story, is horrified that his grandnephew, Roth Edmonds, repeats the same sin as his grandfather, L. Q. C. McCaslin, and in doing so, causes the same miscegenation tragedy to happen. Faulkner, like Ike, probably regards her as black even though she has enough white blood to easily pass for white. Thus, the miscegenation horror has been tragically repeated.

Although the problem of miscegenation is presented in the short story entitled, "Elly," it is not the primary conflict. Elly and her grandmother are products of a decaying South. Elly, desperate for love and security, prostitutes her body in flagrant rebellion against the cold, implacable morals of her grandmother. When the grandmother discovers that Elly is having an affair with a man who supposedly has Negro blood, she considers it the ultimate in disgrace. Elly urges Paul to marry her because it would be total repudiation
of her grandmother's and the Old South's traditions.

The supposed mulatto, Paul, has the affair with Elly on the condition that he will not be expected to marry her. He is honest with Elly from the beginning by asserting that he has no intention of marrying a whore. Evidently he is not emotionally upset about his supposed black blood because when Elly confronts him with it in the grandmother's presence, Paul is indifferent.

Paul is eventually killed in a car crash when Elly, in a fit of anger, causes the car to swerve out of control. Faulkner intends his reader to sympathize with Paul, a blameless victim of the struggle between Elly and her grandmother. By emphasizing this conflict, Faulkner shows the non-Southern view. To Faulkner, the miscegenation issue, which is so important in Southern society, is subordinate in this story. Faulkner has broader and more liberal views than most of his fellow Southerners.

The final minor mulatto character to be discussed in this paper is Elnora in the short story entitled, "There was a Queen." Elnora, the half-sister to Bayard Sartoris, considers her white Sartoris blood superior to Narcissa Benbow Sartoris' white blood. Deeply resenting Bayard's widow, Elnora has a "quiet and grave contempt" for Narcissa's orders. She dismisses Narcissa as trash but considers the old white woman, Miss Jenny DuPre, to be the finest example of quality. Faulkner humanizes Elnora by picturing her as the proud,
dignified servant who is devoted to her white mistress, Miss DuPre. Elnora believes that she is superior to Narcissa because Narcissa has stained her name by having an affair with a Yankee.

It has been shown that Faulkner presents stereotyped characters such as BoBo and Tomey's Turl but transforms them into individuals with characteristics of their own. He uses the plight of the mulatto to dramatize the tragic consequences of miscegenation or the subordinate threat of it in stories such as "Elly" and "Delta Autumn." Also Faulkner, in the character of Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, emphasizes the hopelessness felt by many Negroes who find it impossible to rise above their environment. In all of these characterizations, but especially in the unnamed girl's case in "Delta Autumn," the reader senses the tragedy of being mulatto. Irving Howe puts it this way:

As a victim the mulatto must be shown in all his suffering, and as a reminder of the ancestral phobia, must be made once or twice to suffer extravagantly. But since Faulkner is trying to free himself from both the phobia and the injustice it sustains, the mulatto also excites in him his greatest pity, a pity so extreme as often to break past the limits of speech. On the mulatto's frail being descends the whole crushing weight of Faulkner's world.12

The justification for my excluding many other minor mulatto characters is that they are not fully developed enough as characters for me to draw any conclusions about them that can be adequately supported.
III. THE BLACK MULATTO

Faulkner's major mulatto characters who are too dark-skinned to ever attempt to pass for white are Clytie Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Ned McCaslin in *The Reivers*. Clytie and Ned follow different Negro stereotypes. Clytie is the devoted, faithful servant stereotype who resembles Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*. On the other hand, Ned seems to be a combination of two stereotypes, the comic Black Sambo and the sexually potent male. Eventually, both Clytie and Ned emerge as distinctly individual characters.

Clytie Sutpen, daughter of Thomas Sutpen and a slave, faithfully devotes her entire life to serving the Sutpen family. Because she is a Sutpen daughter, she identifies with them and later becomes the central unifying force that holds the family together. It is Nilon's contention that Faulkner views Clytie as a tragic figure because she spends much of her life attempting to atone for her father's sins. Though she is present throughout much of the novel, we don't realize the tragedy of her life until she is shown as a person who has no individual character of her own. She is entirely devoted to her half-brother and sister. When Henry Sutpen murders his and Clytie's half-brother, Charles Bon, Rosa Coldfield hears of Bon's death and rushes to the Sutpen household, wanting to belong by sharing in the family's grief. In a dramatic confrontation, Clytie refuses to let Miss Rosa rush...
to Judith's side. This is an indication of Clytie's protective devotion toward Judith and Henry.

Her loyalty toward the Sutpen family is shown in other ways. Earlier, when Thomas Sutpen goes to war and the plantation is on the verge of ruin, she says, "keeping a kitchen garden of sorts to keep them alive." Although previously a respected household slave, she takes on a man's job of running furrows and cutting wood. Her Sutpen blood causes her to stay although she is free to go:

Clytie, not inept, anything but inept; perverse inscrutable and paradox; free, yet incapable of freedom who had never once called herself a slave, holding fidelity to none like the indolent and solitary wolf or bear . . . (156).

Fiercely proud, she attempts to uphold some remnants of her family's honor. Clytie refuses to compromise that honor by allowing what she considers "white trash" to enter the Sutpen mansion. Addressing Wash Jones, Clytie firmly says: 

"Stop right there, white man. Stop right where you is. You aint never crossed this door while the Colonel was here and you aint going to cross it now." (281).

Another aspect of Clytie's tragic life is that she seems to be a frustrated mother. Unable to establish any intimate relationships outside of her own family, she can't have children of her own. Yet much of her life is spent caring for others. Years after Bon's death, Clytie travels to New Orleans to locate Bon's son, Charles Etienne Bon. She brings him back to Sutpen's Hundred and, although the security
and warmth that go with love seem to be lacking, she jealously protects him as a lioness would her cub:

"While Clytie watched, never out of sight of him, with that brooding fierce unflagging jealous care, hurrying out whenever anyone white or black stopped in the road as if to wait for the boy to complete the furrow and pause long enough to be spoken to, sending the boy on with a single quiet word or gesture..." (200).

When Etienne repudiates Clytie and Judith by taking a black mistress, he alienates himself from them. Yet, after Etienne's death, Clytie takes his idiot son, Jim Bond, and raises him as her own.

The tragedy of the Sutpen family, exemplified in Clytie Sutpen, becomes especially poignant when Miss Rosa and Quentin discover that Clytie has been caring for Henry Sutpen. For four years, Clytie has been hiding the dying Henry from the outside world. Clytie begs Quentin to take Miss Rosa away from Henry's room, asserting: "'Whatever he done, me and Judith and him have paid it out'" (370).

Eventually, Miss Rosa insists upon exposing Henry by having an ambulance sent out to Sutpen's Hundred. Clytie has been watching and waiting for this moment. She sets the mansion afire to spare the humiliation of exposure. It is as if Clytie's and Henry's sacrifice is the final expiation for their father's guilt. Faulkner pictures a lonely, tragic figure watching serenely from the window, waiting to die:

... and then for a moment maybe Clytie appeared in that window from which she must have been watching the gates constantly day and night for three months—the
tragic gnome's face beneath the clean headrag, against a red background of fire, seen for a moment between two swirls of smoke, looking down at them, perhaps not even now with triumph and no more of despair than it had ever worn, possibly even serene... (375-6).

Clytie has sacrificed her life for the Sutpen family and we admire her courage, bravery and character.

Like Clytie Sutpen, Ned McCaslin from *The Reivers* is conscious of family ties. One of the characteristics that make Ned an individual and not a stereotyped Negro is his claim to superiority because of his blood relationship to the patriarch, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin. This pride is exemplified in his relationships with Boon Hogganbeck, Lucius Priest, and the Priest clan. Ned seems to think that he deserves to get away with far more than the average Negro because of L. Q. C. McCaslin's white blood in his veins. Lucius Priest explains Ned's story to his grandson:

Because he--Ned--was a McCaslin, born in the McCaslin back yard in 1960. He was our family skeleton; we inherited him in turn, with his legend (which had no firmer supporter than Ned himself) that his mother had been the natural daughter of old Lucius Quintus Carothers himself and a Negro slave; never did Ned let any of us forget that he, along with Cousin Isaac, was an actual grandson to old time-honored Lancaster where we moiling Edmondses and Priests, even though three of us--you, me and my grandfather--were named for him, were mere diminishing connections and hangers-on.15

Ned's audacious acts toward his white superiors result in extremely comic episodes and make Ned a major attraction of the book. At the beginning of the story, it becomes
readily obvious that shrewd Ned, who adheres to the Negro stereotype whenever convenient, knows just how far he can go in maneuvering the Priest family. For example, at first, Ned totally ignores Grandfather's new automobile because Boon Hogganbeck has assumed its sole guardianship and Ned knows he wouldn't have a chance to drive it anyway. Consequently, Ned refuses to wash and polish the car even though, as servant, he would normally be expected to do so. Grandfather knows better than to even ask Ned to work with the car:

But although he declined to recognise that the automobile existed on the place, he and Grandfather had met on some unspoken gentlemen's ground regarding it: Ned never to speak in scorn or derogation of its ownership and presence, Grandfather never to order Ned to wash and polish it as he used to do the carriage--which Grandfather and Ned both knew Ned had refused to do, even if Boon had let him . . . (31).

Ned is in direct contrast to the stereotype of the dull, slow witted Negro. He is observant enough to realize that Boon and Lucius plan to drive to Memphis while the rest of the Priest family attends a funeral. When Boon and Lucius discover Ned hidden underneath the tarpaulin in the back seat of the car, Ned pompously asserts his lineage to dispel any doubts about his right to accompany them: "'I got just as much right to a trip as you and Lucius,' Ned said. 'I got more. This automobile belongs to Boss and Lucius ain't nothing but his grandboy and you aint no kin to him a-tall!'" (55). Ned is wise enough to revert to the stereotype whenever convenient. When the automobile becomes stuck at Hell's
Creek, and Boon orders Ned out of the car and into the mud to help push the car. Ned feigns ignorance of such things: "'I dont know how,' Ned said, not moving. 'I aint learned about automobiles yet. I'll just be in your way. I'll set here with Lucius so you can have plenty of room'" (63).

The reader realizes that Ned plays the darky role out of laziness, not stupidity. Ned is irresponsible, sometimes selfish, good-humored, a liar, and oversexed. Faulkner pictures Ned as a Negro who has had four wives and is still "tomcatting" around. For example, at the whorehouse in Memphis, Ned chases the golden-toothed Minnie. Faulkner emphasizes Ned's sexual appetite in this scene:

"Aint nothing wrong," Minnie said. "He like most of them. He got plenty of appetite but he cant seem to locate where it is . . . He just nature-minded. Maybe a little extra. I'm used to it. A heap of them are that way: so nature-minded dont nobody get no rest until they goes to sleep" (100).

Later, Ned is caught propositioning the fat cook who works at Madame Reba's house. According to Lucius:

We followed the waiter back to the kitchen. Ned was standing quite close to the cook, a tremendous Negro woman who was drying dishes at the sink. He was saying, "If it's money worrying your mind, Good-looking, I'm the man what--" (149).

It is obvious, then, that Ned's personality does contain stereotyped characteristics. He fits into many of the Negro stereotypes. Yet Ned's qualities of humor, intelligence, and compassion far outweigh them. Perhaps Faulkner intends the reader to identify with Ned and his "good" and "bad" side.
Ned emerges as basically a sympathetically treated character because he does have these "good" qualities. Consider his relationship with Lucius Priest. Compassionately, he attempts to shield Lucius from learning about Miss Corrie's prostituting her body to the sheriff in order to save the horse race. Faulkner's final picture of Ned is as a distinctive and rather loveable human being.

To summarize, Faulkner's minor mulatto characters who have dark skins or Negroid features accept the South's classification of them as black without question, or at least without undue emotional disturbance. They may lead relatively happy lives, or they may lead tragic ones. If they do, the cause is not basically racial. If anything, they are pictured as proud of their white blood and may even boast of it.

Clytie is the best example of Faulkner's presentation of the dark-skinned mulatto as a tragic figure, Ned the best example of a comic one. Clytie's life, in fact, is a whole series of tragedies, all of them growing from her misplaced loyalty to her white father and her half-brothers and half-sister, both white and black. The saddest aspect of her life is that she never really has an opportunity to develop a separate identity apart from the Sutpen family. She is devoted to their well-being, and her faithfulness to the family endures to the final, bitter, tragic end. Ned, like Clytie, emerges as loyal to his white relatives, but in an entirely different way. With both, Faulkner manages to
create individualized characters. He is not blinded by the racial stereotyping he must have been exposed to all his life.

Because of Clytie's and Ned's dark skins, there is no possibility of their passing for white. Consequently, they feel much less alienated from society than do the mulattoes who will be discussed in the next chapter.
IV. THE WHITE MULATTO

Faulkner's attitude toward Joe Christmas in *Light in August* and Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!* is especially sympathetic as Joe and Charles are light-skinned enough to pass for white, but do not because of their small percentage of black blood. His examination of these two major mulatto characters exposes the South's fanatic attitude toward the threat of miscegenation during the early part of the twentieth century. According to Fiedler: "More shocking to the imagination of the South than the fantasy of a white man overwhelmed by a hostile black world is the fear that finally all distinctions will be blurred and black and white no longer exist." Charles Bon and Joe Christmas are victims of intolerance and bigotry that cause the eventual denial of their humanity. Doc Hines and Joanna Burden deny Joe Christmas his humanity by repressively forcing him to admit that he is something evil. Thomas Sutpen and his son, Henry, deny Charles Bon his humanity by refusing to recognize him as son and brother. Faulkner's sympathetic attitude becomes evident in his concentration upon Joe and Charles as tragic figures and as victims of Southern whites.

Joe Christmas is the tragic result of a loveless, insecure childhood. Faulkner shows with horrifying clarity how Joe's mind is systematically warped and twisted by many of the whites he comes into contact with—often, a result of the
South's prejudiced, stereotyped attitudes toward Negroes. After a white woman is found murdered, Joe is immediately assumed to be the prime suspect when the whites are told that Joe has Negro blood.

At the beginning of *Light in August*, Faulkner establishes the idea that Joe Christmas is different. Even before the Jefferson townspeople know of Joe's supposed Negro blood, they tend to be prejudiced against him because he is an "outsider," has an unusual name, and dresses in fancy clothing to work at the mill. Perhaps Joe dresses as he does to avoid the stigma of being classed as a laborer. It is my impression that at the time this story was supposed to have taken place (approximately early twentieth century), white workers wore shabby work clothes to work because they had no reason to stand out from the rest. Many black laborers dressed up to go to work. Faulkner has Joe dressed like this to indicate that Joe is unconsciously revealing himself as Negro.

Perhaps sensing the town's hostility, Joe becomes anti-social. He refuses to speak to anyone at the mill for six months. People conjecture, but nobody knows what he does outside of working hours. Because of his "odd" behavior, the townspeople are only too willing to jump on Joe, accusing him of Joanna Burden's murder. When Joe Brown, alias Lucas Burch, insinuates that Joe is part Negro in a desperate attempt to clear himself of suspicion of murder and to get the reward money, it is only then that the sheriff and the
marshal believe Brown's story: "Well,' the sheriff says, 'I believe you are telling the truth at last. You go on with Buck, now, and get a good sleep. I'll attend to Christmas.' To them, it seems quite natural that a "nigger" would lust after a white woman, rape her, and eventually murder her.

We have seen above how Faulkner emphasizes Joe's individuality. Paradoxically, he also makes Joe a black murderer suspected of the rape of a white woman, the most common black stereotype. Does Faulkner have any reason other than the obvious one of violent melodramatic action? Perhaps it is to show Joe's obstinate defiance concerning the doubt about whether he is white or black. This defiance exemplifies his contempt for the quirk of fate that has made him a supposed mulatto.

In contrast to the townspeople's bigoted attitudes toward Joe, Faulkner's attitude toward Joe is much more humane. Throughout the novel, Faulkner intends the reader to pity Joe. We identify with and sympathize with his feelings of loneliness and isolation. Joe knows he doesn't belong and that he can't belong. As Joe contemplates his and Joanna's future while walking through Freedman Town, the lonely sadness of alienation becomes especially poignant: The Negroes "seemed to enclose him like bodiless voices murmuring, talking, laughing, in a language not his" (106-7).

After the bitter end of the affair with the waitress, Bobbie, Joe wanders aimlessly from one town to the next,
alternating between a white and black role. At one point, he repudiates his white blood. While sleeping with a Negro woman, he tries to inhale her blackness and exhale his whiteness: "... trying to breathe into himself the dark odor, the dark and inscrutable thinking and being of negroes, with each suspiration trying to expel from himself the white blood and the white thinking and being" (212). Slabey argues:

His is the problem of the American mulatto whose position is ambiguous because no matter how small his proportion of Negro blood may be, according to Southern genetics, he is treated the same as a full-blooded Negro. As a result, he experiences profound inner conflicts: he is unable to enter the White group and unwilling to belong to the Black group (where "light" Negroes are frequently looked down upon). 19

Faulkner continues to evoke strong feelings of pity for Joe by exposing Joe's intolerable childhood. Most of Faulkner's readers conclude that Joe's tragic end is primarily a result of environmental pressure, a loveless childhood and racial and religious intolerance. These racist, intolerant attitudes manifest themselves in various kinds of religious bigotry and this is the kind of environment in which Joe attempts to assert his humanity. According to Howell, most of the major characters in Light in August such as McEachern, Hines, and Joanna Burden that influence Joe's life are isolated from society because of their warped religious beliefs:
Beneath Joanna Burden's violent humanitarianism is the old orthodoxy of New England. Her sense of sin is so profound that when Christmas refuses to repent and pray with her, she determines to kill him. Old Doc Hines's sermons to the Negroes on white supremacy "are a bitter parody of the doctrine of predestination." Doc Hines himself is an insane religious fanatic. A white supremacist, he is subject to wild outbursts of religious and racial bigotry. His violent attitude toward the Negroes fits "well enough the branch of Presbyterianism which, during the religious controversy preceding the Civil War, evolved the theories of Divine sanction for slavery." Because of his emotional disturbance, his daughter Milly's sexual adventure provides a focus for his tensions, and his violence changes into religious bigotry. Doc Hines is positive that the father of Milly's child is part Negro. He first decides that Milly has had an affair with a Negro and then bullies the carnival owner into agreeing with him. Thus, it is Doc Hines' own idea that Milly's baby has Negro blood. Chances are that Doc's allegations are not true.

Snatching the child up from its dead mother's body and seeing that it will live, Hinespronounces the significance of its birth in the eyes of the Lord and declares his own future in relation to it: "It's the Lord God's abomination, and I am the instrument of His will." Hines disappears with the child and eventually leaves him at an orphanage. But, working as a janitor, he remains to spy on the "abomination." In his fanatic bigotry and racial hatred, he systematically alienates his peers from Joe by
labeling him, "nigger:"

... old Doc Hines said to him, "Why don't you play with them other children like you used to?" and he didn't say nothing, and old Doc Hines said, "Is it because they call you nigger?" and he didn't say nothing and old Doc Hines said, "Do you think you are a nigger because God has marked your face?"... (362).

As a child, Joe becomes increasingly uneasy about the connotation of the word, "nigger." He questions a Negro working in the orphanage garden:

"... How come you are a nigger?" and the nigger said, "Who told you I am a nigger, you little white trash bastard?" and he says, "I aint a nigger," and the nigger says, "You are worse than that. You don't know what you are. And more than that you won't ever know. You'll live and you'll die and you won't never know," ... (363).

Nilon argues,

The lack of knowledge that the Negro mentions is the core of the problem that Joe faces throughout his life. As a child he must believe that the other children and the adults have some reason for calling him a "nigger" and behaving as they do toward him. His memories of childhood are his only proof that he is a Negro. When he is older, he believes even though he has no proof.23

In my opinion, Nilon's interpretation of the gardener's retort to Joe is incorrect. The gardener is not speaking racially, here. Rather, he is merely expressing a retort at Joe's calling him nigger. The gardener refers to the fact that Joe is an orphan who hasn't any idea who he really is. He is not calling attention to Joe's supposed Negro blood. It is obvious that Joe's feeling of alienation is related to his own unhappy childhood and to his ability to pass for white even though he believes that he has black blood.
Faulkner paints a particularly poignant picture of Joe, the homeless, unloved orphan, taunted by Doc Hines and rejected by his peers. With his childlike mind, simple, fatalistic, and trusting, he knows intuitively that tragedy awaits him.

The most profound question of *Light in August* is asked by Joe when he learns of the fear of Joanna Burden's relatives. They were afraid that the Jefferson townspeople would desecrate and mutilate Joanna's grandfather's and half-brother's dead bodies because the Burden family were Negro-sympathizers: "'Oh,' Christmas said. 'They might have done that? dug them up after they already killed, dead? Just when do men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?'" (236). Olga Vickery comments that Joanna, too, is preoccupied with "the antithesis of black and white." Even though they are lovers, they are both repelled at what the other represents.

While her body surrenders completely to him, Joanna still mutters "Negro! Negro! Negro!" And Joe, on his way to her bedroom, still pauses to smash the dishes of food prepared by the white woman and left for him in the kitchen.

Joe resents her leaving food for him in the kitchen even though they are lovers. He thinks that this is her way of stating his inferiority. Having lived a strict, disciplined life, Joanna overreacts when Joe admires her as a woman, becoming almost a nymphomaniac. However, this is only a short lapse from her traditionally conservative attitudes. Soon,
she broods over her moral laxity and rededicates herself to
the uplifting of the black race. By urging Joe to identify
himself as Negro, she hopes to achieve salvation. Joe
murders her because she practically forces him to acknowledge
his blackness. Though he successfully eludes his pursuers
for a week, Joe can see himself being hunted down: "It seemed
to him that he could see himself being hunted by white men at
last into the black abyss which had been waiting, trying, for
thirty years to drown him..." (313). He realizes that the
end is near. All of his life, Christmas has rejected both
the white and black society. In his last week of freedom, he
lapses into a trancelike stream-of-consciousness state where
everything becomes unreal except the realization that he can
never break out of the self-hate chain engendered by the
knowledge of his Negro blood:

And yet he is still outside the circle. "And yet I
have been further in these seven days than in all the
thirty years," he thinks. "But I have never got out­
side that circle. I have never broken out of the ring
of what I have already done and cannot ever undo," he
thinks quietly, sitting on the seat, with planted on
the dashboard before him the shoes, the black shoes
smelling of negro; that mark on his ankles the gauge
definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping
up his legs, moving from his feet upward as death moves
(321).

At the last, Joe walks into Mottstown as if he wants to be
captured, as if he doesn't want to fight fate any longer.

Any serious attempt to interpret Faulkner's attitude
toward Joe Christmas would not be complete without a comment
upon Gavin Stevens' puzzling meditation concerning the
struggle between Joe's white and black blood. It occurs
toward the end of the novel when Joe has been surrounded by
his captors:

"But his [Joe's] blood would not be quiet, let him
save it. It would not be either one or the other and
let his body save itself. Because the black blood
drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white
blood drove him out of there, as it was the black
blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood
which would not let him fire it. And it was the white
blood which sent him to the minister, which rising in
him for the last and final time, sent him against all
reason and all reality, into the embrace of a chimera,
a blind faith in something read in a printed Book.
Then I believe that the white blood deserted him for the
moment. Just a second, a flicker, allowing the black
to rise in its final moment and make him turn upon that
on which he had postulated his hope of salvation. It
was the black blood which swept him by his own desire
beyond the aid of any man, swept him up into that
ecstasy out of a black jungle where life has already
ceased before the heart stops and death is desire and
fulfillment. And then the black blood failed him
again, as it must have in crises all his life. He did
not kill the minister. He merely struck him with the
pistol and ran on and crouched behind that table and
defied the black blood for the last time, as he had
been defying it for thirty years. He crouched behind
that overturned table and let them shoot him to death,
with that loaded and unfired pistol in his hand" (424-
425).

Is Gavin Stevens Faulkner's persona in this quotation? Pos-
sibly, because in The Mansion, The Town, and Knight's Gambit,
Gavin Stevens is a voice that Faulkner uses. Often the
point-of-view character, he probably is one that echoes
Faulkner most of the time.

It is my opinion that in this particular quote, Gavin
Stevens is merely reflecting the attitudes of the townspeople
from Jefferson. Faulkner seems far too sophisticated and
knowledgeable to arbitrarily assign positive values to white blood and negative values to black blood. If Faulkner were actually speaking in this quote, it would appear that Faulkner had an unconscious anti-Negro bias. Throughout this paper, evidence supports, if not proves, Faulkner's sympathy. It would seem far more plausible that Gavin Stevens is the townspeople's voice. Tischler agrees that Faulkner could not be speaking here. She asserts that,

More damaging is the idea of blood warfare in the products of miscegenation—as if black—white warfare is as inevitable to Southern thinking as capital—labor warfare is to Communist theory. Supposedly the black blood and the white blood stage a gory civil war in the mind and body of the mulatto, . . .

It is important that the reader realizes that this was the typical racist Southern view held by many people.

It has been my contention that light-skinned Joe Christmas experiences acute feelings of alienation because he is a victim of Southern intolerance and bigotry. He becomes increasingly preoccupied with the possibility that he has black blood and is unwilling or unable to assimilate himself into either the white or the black society. A truly tragic character, Joe Christmas seems doomed from the beginning.

Another victim of white prejudice is Charles Bon in Absalom, Absalom! Also a victim of the class system, he is rejected both as son and brother because of his small percentage of black blood. "According to Faulkner's tragic
reading of the history of the South, the racial problem was caused by the Southern economy which was founded on the violation of Nature and on the principle of the fundamental inequality of men: . . ."27 According to Fiedler, the South viewed all black men as potential rapists. They felt honor-bound to protect their women and the pure white race from the contaminating stain of black blood. Any potential union of black and white was viewed with reactionary horror.28

Charles Bon's humanity is denied him because of Sutpen's rejection of him as son and Henry's rejection of him as brother. Because Sutpen rejects him, Charles forces the issue concerning his marriage to Judith. Charles and Judith are half brother and sister. Charles threatens not only incest, but also threatens to bring black blood into the Sutpen family if he is not recognized.

Faulkner's attitude toward the mulatto in Absalom, Absalom! is difficult to determine because of his use of the multiple narrator technique. Four characters narrate the story of the South's crime: Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson, and Shreve McCannon. Admittedly, it is impossible to prove that any one of these characters speaks for Faulkner all of the time. However, it is my contention that Faulkner uses Quentin to express the view of a neurotic, sensitive, and intelligent Southerner while using Shreve, the Canadian, to express the view of an outsider untainted by American race prejudice.
Miss Rosa Coldfield and Mr. Compson are Southerners who are blinded by their environment. Miss Rosa's narration is obviously warped and misguided because of her undying hatred of Thomas Sutpen. Mr. Compson has a tendency to rationalize the actions of the characters as he tells the story. A man who studies the classics, he accepts the crime of the South, man's inhumanity to man, because he doesn't understand the real crime which is being committed in this case, Sutpen's utter disregard for his son's rights as a human being. It is obvious that these two characters would not be likely to speak for Faulkner.

On the other hand, Quentin and Shreve are representative of the new generation—as was Faulkner. Faulkner was born in 1897 while Quentin's and Shreve's birthdates occurred around 1890. Both Quentin and Shreve attempt to come to grips with the South's crime, but each reacts according to the way he has been brought up. Quentin possibly represents the sensitive, modern Southerner—the Faulkner who is forced against his will to admit that Sutpen symbolizes the crime of the South. Shreve is the concerned outsider who becomes involved with Thomas Sutpen's story as an interested human being. Why? Because man's inhumanity to man is not confined to the South. It is a universal sin. Shreve, too, is often able to comprehend and comment on the injustice done to Charles Bon as well as to the other Negroes in the story.

Quentin, as a representative of the young, modern
Southerner, seems to be too emotionally involved to enjoy reconstructing the past. Shreve asks Quentin to, "Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all" (174). Attempting to answer Shreve's question, Quentin tells the story of Thomas Sutpen's rejection of his wife and son because they have a trace of Negro blood in them. Quentin describes the situation in such a way that the reader feels strongly the victimization of Charles Bon. Supposedly, Sutpen comments to Quentin's grandfather concerning Charles' mother: "'I found that she was not and could never be, through no fault of her own, adjunctive or incremental to the design which I had in mind, so I provided for her and put her aside'" (240). Thus, Sutpen impassively casts Charles and his mother aside and, in doing so, denies them their full rights as human beings.

Shreve, the Canadian, enthusiastically attempts to reconstruct what happens next. Because of Sutpen's rejection, Shreve imagines that Bon seeks Sutpen out, quietly expecting to be recognized as Sutpen's son. According to Shreve, Charles muses,

That's all I want. He need not even acknowledge me; I will let him understand just as quickly that he need not do that, that I do not expect that, will not be hurt by that, just as he will let me know quickly that I am his son. . . . (319).

Shreve guesses that Sutpen rejects Charles. The reader knows where Shreve's sympathies lie because Shreve repeatedly
calls Sutpen a "demon." In Shreve's imaginative reconstruction of the story, Henry Sutpen, Charles' half-brother, invites Charles to visit Sutpen's Hundred. Charles agrees, only to be ignored by Sutpen.

The problem of miscegenation becomes prominent in the confrontation between Henry and Charles. Before this, Henry does all he can to assert his respect and admiration for Charles. When he learns that Charles' father is Sutpen and that Charles has an octoroon wife, he is even willing to accept Judith's incestuous marriage to a bigamist. That is, Charles would be marrying his half-sister. Henry faithfully stands by Charles by rejecting Sutpen and renouncing his birthright. But when he learns of Charles' Negro blood, he kills Charles. He can tolerate bigamy and even incest, but not miscegenation. The scene is reenacted in Quentin's mind:

So it's the miscegenation, not the incest
which you can't bear . . .
Henry looks at the pistol; now he is not only panting, he is trembling; . . .
--You are my brother.
--No I'm not. I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister (336, 357, 358).

The question of Charles Bon's motivation becomes important here. Does he force the issue concerning his marriage to Judith because of the taint of his Negro blood? Or, rather, is Charles motivated by the perverse determination of a spurned son? Charles seems to be a victim of a tragic compulsion. He uses a roundabout, twisted revenge to force
the issue of miscegenation, knowing that this will hurt Thomas and Henry Sutpen the most.

We may assume that Quentin, at times, represents Faulkner's attitude. According to Vickery, Quentin "represents all those who are dedicated to serving the past, to preserving and perpetuating in their own lives those myths and rituals enshrined by their tradition." Fiedler is even more emphatic on the question of who speaks for Faulkner when he comments that Quentin is Faulkner's conscience.

Shreve enjoys reconstructing the past and treating it playfully. He feels no serious emotional involvement. According to Brooks, Shreve represents the twentieth century skeptic who is not concerned with history, family, or background. Rather, Shreve, as a compassionate human being, is concerned and moved by Charles Bon's story. Faulkner, too, was a compassionate man who recoiled at the South's manipulation of the mulatto and the Negro.

In conclusion, Joe Christmas and Charles Bon are victims of society. Both are victims of man's prejudice and bigotry because they are light-skinned enough to pass for white and are denied this admittance to white society.

In many ways, Joe Christmas and Charles Bon belong to a quite common and traditional American literary type, "tragic mulatto." According to Tischler, the standard white critic, the mulatto has been consistently one of the most popular characters in Southern fiction. The mixture of blood allows the white author to identify more readily
with a "Negro" character, and to allow his predominantly white audience to share that identification; it also gives him a chance to discuss differences between the races, to elicit sympathy for society's cruelty to Negroes, and to narrate a tragic tale with social significance. Historically, this has been the purpose of the tragic mulatto.

Faulkner's sympathy for Charles Bon and Joe Christmas allows him to condemn the South's treatment of the mulatto. The reader becomes emotionally involved with his plight. Gloster, a nonwhite orientated scholar who writes from a different point of view, does not go along with the usual critic's praise of Faulkner's treatment of the mulatto. Gloster believes that Faulkner has used this stereotype unfairly because his approach is color-biased:

Unmistakeable again and again is the hypothesis that white-Negro hybrids have acumen and attractiveness because of their white ancestry, that they deserve pity because the blood of Caucasian fathers flows in their veins, and that the misery, bitterness, defiance, and ambition are traceable to proud paternal forbears.

Because of his black orientation, Gloster seems to be more inclined to find bias and prejudice on the part of Faulkner. He continues:

This color-biased approach to Negro character kept many white writers from painting the whole picture. Liaisons involving colored men and white women which O'Neill, Waldo Frank, Faulkner, Caldwell, and others treat today—and the experiences of their offspring are glossed over by virtually all these authors. Few bothered to explain or imply that when mulattoes surpass they do so not because of white paternity but because of superior parentage and better opportunities.

Even though Faulkner's approach to the tragic mulatto may be somewhat prejudiced, we can attribute that to his
Southern upbringing. His audience was white, literary, and quite liberal. Consequently, Faulkner's treatment of Joe Christmas and Charles Bon stressed to his readers the inhumane treatment of blacks by whites.

In a University of Virginia interview, Faulkner concluded that Sutpen, Dilsey and Joe Christmas were his most tragic characters. Faulkner stated, "It would be between Sutpen and Christmas, Dilsey. I don't think I have a choice. It would probably be between the three."35

I think that Charles Bon and Joe Christmas are Faulkner's most tragically portrayed characters because they become entirely alienated. Dilsey, the black cook who courageously holds the Compson family together, "endures", but she also belongs, that is, she is accepted by both the white and black communities. Sutpen's tragic flaw is his inhumane treatment of other men. Because of this characteristic, his entire dynasty falls. However, he enjoys many years of prosperity before this occurs. In contrast, Joe Christmas and Charles Bon's acute feelings of rejection and isolation because of their small percentage of black blood constitute a far greater tragedy.
V. THE INDIVIDUAL MULATTO

The mulatto who refuses to be stereotyped as either white or black is best represented by Lucas Beauchamp of "The Fire in the Hearth" and Intruder in the Dust. He is the last character to be examined in this paper because he is, for my purposes, the best example of Faulkner's portrayal of the mulatto as an individual. Displaying characteristics of pride, independence, calmness, and poise, Lucas Beauchamp is a human being to be admired and respected.

In the short story, "The Fire and the Hearth," Faulkner introduces us to a stubborn man who refuses to take orders from anyone, especially his white cousin, Roth Edmonds. (Both Lucas and Roth are descendants of L. Q. C. McCaslin. Lucas is a tenant farmer of a piece of Roth's land and has tenure for life. Roth, as the legal owner of the land, will get Lucas' land back when Lucas dies.):

... with Edmonds riding upon his mare maybe three times a week to look at the field, and maybe once during the season stopping long enough to give him advice about it which he completely ignored, ignoring not only the advice but the very voice which gave it, as though the other had not spoken even, whereupon Edmonds would ride on and he would continue with whatever he had been doing, the incident already forgotten, condoned and forgiven, the necessity and time have been served.

Lucas decides upon doing things in his own time and in his own way. He is the complete master of himself. While visiting Cass Edmonds, he goes to the front door, not the back as a Negro would be expected to do.
The story flashes back to the time when Zack Edmonds, Lucas' boyhood friend and playmate, takes Lucas' wife, Molly, as his housekeeper and possible mistress. Molly mothers Zack's son, Roth, because Roth's mother has died in childbirth. Lucas tolerates the unjust situation until his anger causes him to issue an ultimatum to Zack: Molly must be allowed to return home by that evening. In a dramatic confrontation between Lucas and Zack, Lucas asserts his rights as a man: "'I'm a nigger,' Lucas said. 'But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back!'" (47). Zack complies with the ultimatum and Molly is returned to Lucas.

These characteristics of pride, independence and individuality become even more prominent in *Intruder in the Dust*. In this novel, Lucas is an old man. He has been accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, a white man. Most of the novel concentrates on Lucas' relationship with Charles Mallison, a young boy who feels guilty for the sins of his ancestors' treatments of black people.

The major conflict between Chick and Lucas occurs at the beginning of the story. While hunting with a Negro friend, Aleck Sanders, Chick falls through the ice. Suddenly Lucas appears, helps Chick get out and takes him to Lucas' warm cabin. Molly and her daughters dry out Chick's clothing while Lucas offers Chick his own supper. In order not to
owe Lucas anything, Chick offers Lucas money for his kindness. Lucas reacts haughtily by flinging the coins on the floor. This humiliates Chick even more because he realizes that he has made an unforgiveable error. He has attempted to pay for a kind act between two equal human beings. Still, Chick is a product of the South's prejudiced attitudes. Consequently, Chick feels debased because he owes a Negro a favor. Attempting to erase this favor, Chick sends Molly a dress, only to be repaid with molasses. Chick's debt is not paid until he helps dig up a body to prove Lucas' innocence.

Like Ned McCaslin, Lucas is extremely proud of his white McCaslin blood. In reply to a white's burst of obscenity concerning Lucas' arrogance, Lucas replies: "'I aint a Edmonds. I dont belong to these new folks. I belongs to the old lot. I'm a McCaslin.'" In other words, like the character Elnora, Lucas considers his white McCaslin blood to be far superior to any other. Nilon argues: "Lucas is an individual rather than a social being. His quality is defined by what he does rather than by what he is. He possesses Faulkner's cardinal virtues and accepts his own humanity."

Faulkner gives the characteristics which he admires most to Lucas: independence, courage, pride and stubbornness. To this, Faulkner adds Lucas' acceptance of himself as a human being. Because of these "cardinal virtues," Lucas comes the closest to being Faulkner's ideal mulatto character.

The white community becomes frustrated with Lucas'
refusal to play the "nigger" role assigned him. They insist: "We got to make him be a nigger first. He's got to admit he's a nigger. Then maybe we will accept him as he seems to intend to be accepted" (18). However, this is impossible. Lucas refuses to come into town on Saturday as the rest of the Negroes do. He instead comes on a week day, dressed in a black suit.

When Lucas is accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, most whites of Jefferson turn immediately against him. They assume that he is acting like a "nigger" now. A vicious mob forms, ready to lynch Lucas at the slightest provocation. As Lucas is moved to the jail, he remains infuriatingly calm and composed. This upsets the mob even more: "... because the face was not even looking at them but just toward them, arrogant and calm with no more defiance in it than fear: detached, impersonal, almost musing, intractable and composed, ... " (44).

It has been my contention that Lucas spurns identification with either the white or black race. Because of the importance of Lucas' character to the purpose of my paper, I will not summarize him here, but rather will conclude my remarks about him in the conclusion of my paper.
VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that Faulkner's attitude toward the mulatto is basically a sympathetic one. This attitude becomes evident in his characterization of mulattoes. Faulkner's mulattoes usually experience feelings of alienation in direct proportion to their ability to pass for white. For example, BoBo Beauchamp, Tomey's Turl, Ned McCaslin and Clytie Sutpen are relatively relaxed in their Negro role because they are dark-skinned. They have little desire to repudiate their blackness. Faulkner sympathetically transforms them from stereotyped characters to individual people. This is an indication of Faulkner's genius.

In contrast, Faulkner's light-skinned mulatto characters are pictured basically as tragic figures. The unnamed girl in "Delta Autumn" is rejected by the man she loves because she has black blood. Joe Christmas is unable to assimilate himself into either black or white society. His mind is systematically warped by religious and racial bigots. Charles Bon is a victim of racial prejudice. His humanity is denied him by his father and brother. Sutpen and Henry refuse to recognize Charles as son and brother. Charles attempts to force the issue of miscegenation and is murdered by his half-brother, Henry Sutpen.

Faulkner evidently realized the plight of the mulatto and characterized his mulatto characters to shed light upon their
problems.

Finally, Lucas Beauchamp is characterized by his actions rather than by the fact that he is mulatto. Instead of denying his black blood as many of Faulkner's mulattoes do, Lucas proudly accepts his heritage. This heritage includes pride both in his black and white blood. Because of Faulkner's portrayal of Lucas, I think that Faulkner believes racial differences are ultimately superficial, yet Faulkner cannot resist poking fun at Lucas' claims to superiority because of his white blood.

My research into Faulkner's treatment of the mulatto and my conclusion that Faulkner's mulatto usually feels alienated in direct proportion to the lightness of his skin have led me to further conclusions. Faulkner treats mulattoes as victims of their environment, but they are also locked into a hereditary system which to some extent negates environment. Robert Bone comments that heredity plays a cardinal role in the plot and characterization of the early novels [by blacks], and many of the colored protagonists proudly trace their lineage to some erring member of the white aristocracy. Viewed politically, this obsessive concern with ancestry was a means of strengthening the mulatto's plea for special consideration. 39

Both Elnora and Ned McCaslin show this pride in white aristocratic ancestry. Faulkner makes the reader chuckle at their snobbish claims to superiority. His poking fun at these mulattoes would be interpreted as subconscious bias by liberal white and black critics.
Faulkner is usually more interested in light mulattoes than in full-blooded blacks, because as an artist he has one foot in the world of imagination and another foot in the world of external reality. In short, Faulkner with one great exception, the treatment of Dilsey, finds more interest in mulattoes because their struggle for identity is more dramatic.

Finally, how true-to-life is Faulkner's portrait of the mulatto? Does Faulkner establish to the reader his mulatto characters as real people in a real world or do they become symbolic roles which are made up wholly out of his imagination?

To me, a white woman from a middle-class economic background and an English major who is a candidate for a Master of Arts in English, Faulkner's representation seems quite convincing. However, James Baldwin, one of the most prominent black writers of fiction today, thinks that Faulkner's picture is not realistic. According to Baldwin,

And Faulkner's portrait of Negroes, which lack a system of nuances that, perhaps only a black writer can see in black life--for Faulkner could see Negroes only as they related to him, not as they related to each other--are nevertheless made vivid by the torment of their creator.40

This is why, ultimately, all attempts at dialogue between the subdued and subduer [mulattoes and Faulkner] between those placed within history and those dispersed outside, break down. One may say, indeed, that until this hour such a dialogue has scarcely been attempted; the subdued and subduer do not speak the same language.41

We may conclude then, that Faulkner wrote for the liberal white audience of the 1920's through 1960's and not for black
audiences.

Faulkner, a product of racist Mississippi, should be praised, however, for his attempts to expose the South's crime: man's continuing inhumanity to man. By developing this theme, Faulkner exposed many of his fellow Mississippians' prejudices and, in doing so, became almost an outcast in Oxford, Mississippi (his home town). In fact, his novels were taken off Oxford's library shelves in protest.

In conclusion, of the mulatto characters in Faulkner's short stories and novels, Lucas Beauchamp is the only mulatto who is treated mainly as a man, with little emphasis on the color of his skin. Also, Faulkner never includes in his works a mulatto who manages to pass for white completely and rarely includes one who is totally happy in his own environment. To the black novelists of the 19th century, the theme of passing for white was a popular one. James Weldon Johnson explores this idea in The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man. In his novel, the hero intends to spend his life working with the folk music of the Negro. Instead, he becomes horrified when he witnesses a lynching and joins the white race.

All the while I understood that it was not discouragement or fear... that was driving me out of the Negro race. I knew that it was shame, unbearable shame. Shame at being identified with a people that could with impunity be treated worse than animals.42

The white novelists in general, however, in treating this subject of the tragic mulatto character have not been willing to allow the mulatto to live happily in white society. He
is always discovered and either eventually accepts Negro status or dies after a suicide. This is how Faulkner handles it. Possibly, Faulkner recoils at the last minute and succumbs to the general Southern belief that girls like the heroine in "Delta Autumn" are Negroes even though they have only a trace of black blood. Mulattoes such as Faulkner's Joe Christmas and Charles Bon all ultimately are forced to accept the characterization of blackness even though their ancestry is more than three-fourths white and they can pass for white.

This study of the position of mulattoes in society as related to their proportion of white blood in Faulkner's works has led me to my final conclusion. It is true that Faulkner doesn't allow any of his mulatto characters to edge out of the Negro characterization, but Faulkner should be praised for his sympathetic treatment of his mulatto characters and his exposure of the South's inhumanity to man. I think that Faulkner should receive high praise because he overcomes the effects of his prejudiced Southern environment to sympathetically treat the Negro character. Risking his position in Mississippi society, he courageously exposes man's cruelty. Considering this and the fact that he wrote most of his novels and short stories in the 1920's through the 1930's when his views were not shared by the majority of whites in this country, Faulkner does a remarkable job.
VII. NOTES

4. Tischler, p. 87.


17 William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: The Modern Library, 1959), p. 92. Subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

18 Leslie Fiedler says, "In Faulkner's work, the threat of miscegenation is posed not only in terms of future racial contamination, but also in those of a present sexual threat. Out of the semi-obscene sub-literature of Southern racists, he captures and redeems the hysterical vision of the black rapist, the Negro who, by stealth or force (in Faulkner, it is typically stealth which is to say, under the cover of a pseudo-white skin), possesses a white woman." p. 102.


22 Lind, p. 313.

23 Nilon, pp. 77-78.


25 Vickery, pp. 71-72.

26 Tischler, p. 97.

27 Slabey, p. 276.

28 Fiedler, p. 102.

29 Vickery, p. 102.

30 Fiedler, p. 104.

32 Tischler, pp. 85-86.


34 Gloster, p. 17.


38 Nilon, p. 12.


41 Baldwin, p. 49.

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY


