

JOE CHRISTMAS: ABJECTION, TRAUMA, AND MASOCHISM IN
FAULKNER'S *LIGHT IN AUGUST*

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Abstract

This thesis examines Joe Christmas's behavior and psyche through the lens of Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan psychoanalytical theory to understand more fully the tragic character that Faulkner created. Christmas is an abandoned child. Deprived of normative psychosexual developmental, Christmas fails to separate from his mother. As a result, he cannot form a stable masculine subjectivity by interpellating the Name of the Father and entering the symbolic order. Christmas fixates on his mother figures, becomes narcissistic, and is unable to love another. Because of his constellation of developmental woes, trauma, masochism, and suicide define the trajectory of Joe Christmas's life. Trauma and masochism explain Christmas's defiant, but submissive, relations with men, his sexuality, his failed relationships with women, his penchant for beating and being beaten, and ultimately his death. The thesis offers new scholarly insights by examining Christmas in relationship to Gilles Deleuze's three masochistic mothers.