

This thesis deals with the concept of race in the work of the American novelist William Faulkner, namely with the depiction of the tragic mulatto myth in his novel *Light in August*. In this thesis I explain and discuss the concept of racial heritage as such and also within the Southern context. Subsequently, I argue the importance of race for the development of the character of Joe Christmas, the protagonist of the novel. The theoretical part explains the concept of the myth of biracial heritage in broader sense. The following analysis of the tragic hero, in terms of racial and therefore also social predetermination, specifically focuses on the particular situations in Joe Christmas's life that contribute to the core argument of the thesis. The theme of depiction of racial conflict in the American society could be grasped from many various perspectives, discussed on several artistic levels and observed from a number of different angles. There is a vast heritage in the field of literature, paintings or film, documenting the actual state of the society of that time. The matter of Afro-American inheritance that contributed to the cultural complexity and diversity within the American society is, beyond any doubts, a very serious one. The overlooked absurdity of the racial conflict in American democratic system could serve as an example of the greatest paradox in human history.

American democracy has been, more or less, proclaimed for centuries as an ideal democratic state which was always admired for equal treatment of every individual. Built upon the puritan tradition of equality and responsibility of the individual, the American society was gradually becoming rich and mighty. Nevertheless, it was the powerful institution of slavery that the American society adopted as a standard for its own democracy. In the very beginnings, it was plainly and merely the democracy of the white citizens in the United States.