

# william faulkner: the artist as historian

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“To forge the conscience of his race, he stayed in his native spot and, in his soul, in images of vice and virtue, re-enacted the history of that race.”<sup>1</sup> That, says Robert Penn Warren, sums up the accomplishment of William Faulkner.

As a fictional account of racism in Mississippi, *Intruder in the Dust* (1948)<sup>2</sup> is clearly meant to present the South’s efforts to sweep away the cobwebs of its immoral racist policies. Faulkner’s social novel dramatizes the strife between black and white and presents the conflict which ultimately thwarted the efforts of the whites to aid the Negro. Moreover, the novel prophesies a civil rights struggle between state and federal forces. The comprehensive picture of segregational beliefs and practices in *Intruder* is verified and documented in James W. Silver’s historical study of racism, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (1964).<sup>3</sup> To compare Faulkner’s imaginary Mississippi with the historian’s view of that state will show that Faulkner’s novel recognizes segregational practices, foresees the Negro’s rebellion and elevates the civil rights conflict to a national level.

Many critics dismiss *Intruder* because of its optimism which, as Edmund Wilson observes, reflects the year in which it was written, 1948. True, the hope of a post war detente between races is reflected in Faulkner’s novel; but also present is the South’s rejection of any external interference in Southern politics.

Critics fail to acknowledge that Faulkner’s fears became fact in the federal-state confrontation on the “Ole Miss” campus in 1962. Indeed, the years 1948 and 1962 represent the hopes and failures of the democratic process. In 1948 the Democratic Party hammered a civil rights plank into its platform; in 1962 riots and angry shouts of “never” roared throughout Mississippi. In 1948 the moderate Frank E. Smith was elected to office in Mississippi and foresaw a new dawn of racial cooperation; by 1962 Mississippians were antagonistic toward any moderation

and voted Congressman Smith out of office. Furthermore, 1948 witnessed the integration of the armed forces by order of President Harry Truman, the first time a president clearly put the White House behind civil liberties; in 1962 the military quelled, on behalf of the national government, an uprising in Mississippi against federal jurisdiction. Although Faulkner died a few months before the 1962 insurrection, *Intruder in the Dust*, written fourteen years before, foresaw that battle. Therefore, it is fitting to acknowledge the depth of Faulkner's penetration into the mind of a racist society. To appreciate the accuracy and the scope of Faulkner's social vision, a summary of a recent work which verifies that vision is necessary.

In *Mississippi: The Closed Society* Silver documents the efforts of a society to shut its doors and windows to the outside world. Silver describes the deprivation of the Negro from the post-Civil War period to the riots of 1962. Influencing the historian's mission is the adjuration of Faulkner's social novel.

Some things you must always be unable to bear.  
Some things you must never stop refusing to bear.  
Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame.  
No matter how young you are or how old you have got.  
Not for kudos and not for cash; your picture in the paper  
nor money in the bank either. Just refuse to bear them.<sup>4</sup>

"The Establishment of Orthodoxy," Silver's initial chapter, records Mississippi's century-long success at constructing a wall of prejudice to separate black and white. The mortar binding the wall is that cohesive substance, White Supremacy, the belief in the biological superiority of the white race. Public officials are selected by the citizens to repair and improve the wall. One of them, Governor James K. Vardaman (1904-08), spoke suitably for his constituents: the Negro, he said, is "a lazy, lustful animal which no conceivable amount of training can transform into a tolerable citizenry."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the society helped maintain its orthodoxy by keeping the Negro indigent, unable to compete for the same rewards as his white masters or to refute the premise of white supremacy.

Who is responsible for the injustices in Mississippi? According to Silver's "The Voices of Militancy" all groups have suppressed civil liberties—either by their silence or by their active obstruction. Activists have used both peaceful persuasion and violence to achieve desired ends. Politicians, professional people and Citizens Council members have been masters of peaceful persuasion; the Klan, law officials and the laboring strata of society have used violence to suppress Negroes.

The poor whites are also the victims of the closed society. Without money to raise themselves out of their sloth (the State cannot aid them without aiding the Negro, so it sacrifices all of the poor for the cult of racism), these social victims use violence to defeat Negro challenges

and therefore preserve the wall of prejudice. Silver explains why this militant group supports the status quo in Mississippi.

It makes no difference whether these people are suffering from their own personal inadequacies or whether they are overwhelmed by circumstances; they escape from their troubles periodically into the excitement of racial conflict. They are impelled to keep the Negro down in order to look up to themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Byron de la Beckwith, the alleged but unconvicted murderer of Medgar Evers, is cited as a representative of this militant lower element.

Not all groups supporting segregation in the closed society are violent. "The Voices of Acquiescence" are the educational, professional, industrial and religious groups which yield to the militants. Indeed, Silver maintains that no Mississippi lawyer publicly supported the federal court decision of 1954. He describes the Mississippians whose silence contributes to the evils of segregation.

There are many thousands of 'men of good will' in Mississippi, mild-mannered people for the most part, who in their day-to-day affairs do what they can to ameliorate the difficult conditions imposed upon their fellow man by the closed society. But because of a strong desire to live in peace, or because of one or another kind of fear, these men will not openly protest what they know in their hearts are gross evils.<sup>7</sup>

Silver's chapter "The Closed Society and the Negro" presents two major effects of white supremacy: the defenselessness of a citizenry which has no vote, and the suffering that Negroes accept as a way of life. He describes the intolerable nature of white oppression.

From birth to death the Negro was exposed to an irresistible pressure toward deferential behavior. When he failed to conform he was driven out or even killed. He was regarded by most whites and possibly by himself, as being shiftless, apathetic, capricious . . . insensitive, and, for the most part, an amiable and happy beast perfectly adapted to his wretched position.<sup>8</sup>

Yet some Negroes—as exemplified by Medgar Evers and James Meredith—resisted the oppression. It is the Negro, Silver maintains, who must take the larger step on the road to his freedom, the Negro who must sacrifice even more to realize that goal.

In his fifth chapter, "The Great Confrontation and Its Aftermath," Silver describes the violence erupting in the confrontation between state and federal forces. Supported by federal authority, James Meredith's attempts to enter the white institution "Ole Miss" met with forceful opposition from a hostile state. This chapter gives eye-witness details of the confrontation at "Ole Miss."

The sixth and last chapter of Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* is entitled "The Voices of Dissent and the Future of the Closed Society." Its thesis is "the closed society is never really closed. There always have been and there always will be dissenters, doubters who will point to the road not taken."<sup>9</sup> In this important chapter Silver defines the difference between Mississippi's segregational policies and those of other states.

Mississippi is the way it is not because of its views on the Negro—here it is simply 'the South exaggerated'—but because of its closed society, its refusal to allow freedom of inquiry or to tolerate 'error of opinion.'<sup>10</sup>

What is the future of the closed society? Silver advocates the reform of institutions as the necessary measure in eliminating the status quo. With his observations of the Oxford battle in 1962, an epiphany occurs within Silver. He realizes that changes in Mississippi must come from revolutionary and not evolutionary process. Indeed, in this excellent book Silver interprets the events for us, informing us of the action required to change the course of history in that state. His recommendation: federal force must be applied to break down the walls of the closed society.

To show that his position is shared by others, Silver draws upon William Faulkner for support.

We speak now against the day when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will when they have been forced to accept what they at one time might have accepted with dignity and good will . . . .

This implies that in 1956 Faulkner regrettably foresaw that force would be employed to change the South's social structure. But it is in his novel *Intruder in the Dust* where the drama of civil rights is enacted.

*Intruder's* social criticism, written before Silver's documentation, is extremely perceptive studied in conjunction with the historian. Whereas *Sanctuary* (1931) protests the inequality of justice among whites in Jefferson, *Intruder* is Faulkner's forceful outcry against the injustices committed against the Negro in Yoknapatawpha County. Certainly Faulkner has written about the Negro's plight in earlier works, as part of the larger theme of man's spiritual turmoil. In *Intruder* Faulkner writes primarily to disclose the sterility segregation brings to blacks and whites alike and to present alternatives to the closed society.

The plot of *Intruder* revolves around the dignified, solemn and elderly Negro Lucas Beauchamp, who is falsely accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, a poor white. Chick Mallison, old Miss Habersham and the young Negro Aleck Sander believe Lucas to be innocent and

they contrive to prove his case. Symbolically, the novel promises to release the Negro from centuries of imprisonment through the efforts of both black and white southerners. Central to the theme is the quiet rebellion of Lucas and Aleck, the flawed moral growth of Chick Mallison and the impotence of the white southern liberal, Gavin Stevens.

*Intruder's* interest to us is the implied attempt to demolish the walls of orthodoxy, to disprove the belief in white supremacy. Chick's superstitions lead him to believe that Negroes are biologically different from whites. Four years later (when he is sixteen) Chick learns that his preconceived notions are foolish. Nevertheless, others defend these superstitions which foreswear the Negro from the human race. The doctrine of white supremacy, with its disregard for equal justice, leads to the threatened lynching of Lucas and, it must be acknowledged, to the ominous states' rights stand assumed by Chick at the book's conclusion. By assigning to Mississippi the right to final interpretation of the U. S. Constitution, Chick buttresses the walls of the closed society and suppresses Negro rights.

To show Faulkner's antipathy for racist politics, Governor Vardaman appears in the novel as the foul, crass Vardaman Gowrie, a member of the lawless hill family. Otherwise, Faulkner avoids the olympian field of Southern politics. To write about politics is to dramatize the *external* operations of segregation; Faulkner rightly chooses to expose segregation's protean nature as it has been cultivated *within* the individual's consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The Gowries are the militants, masons who labor most diligently to erect the walls of prejudice which imprison the Negro. The Gowries epitomize the poor whites, the ignorant, lawless Mississippians. They are the people most opposed to any change in the status of the Lucas Beauchamps. It is the Gowries who symbolize the hate and evil which strike at the Negro but rebound even against the white man:

Where peace officers from town didn't even go unless they were sent for and strange white men didn't wander far from the highway after dark and no Negro at any time—where as a local wit said once the only stranger ever to enter with impunity was God and He only by daylight and on Sunday. . . . (35-36)

Faulkner condemns the bellicose members of the closed society and those whites who endorse the depredation of the Negro.

They had already condemned him [Lucas] but on Beat Four, come not to see what they called justice done nor even retribution exacted but to see that Beat Four should not fail its white man's high estate. (137)

Faulkner's realistic description of the Gowries is supported by an article written by Silver's son and the editor of the *Mississippian*, a student publication at the University of Mississippi.

## GOWRIES AT OLE MISS

Of all William Faulkner's characters none is [sic] more unsavory than the Gowries of *Intruder in the Dust*. Frustrated, simple people, they vented the anger stirred in them by their low position on the innocent and defenseless.

The Gowries were not Southern in the good sense, but part of that indolent and bigoted class which finds itself at the bottom of all societies. They did not live by courage and honor and compassion—the code of the true Southerners—but were a cruel and petty people.

Our contemporary Goweries [sic] are much the same. They sometimes hide behind crude pseudo-legal and historical distortions, but they are still driven by a feeling in their guts and not rational thought. Shabby and animal they brag they will “get” the objects of their hatred, just as their precursors [sic] bragged they would “get” Lucas Beauchamp.

They allow themselves to be manipulated by demagogic Snopes-style politicians playing on their prejudices, and brand those who tell them the truth “scalawags” and “quislings.”

Mississippi will have her Goweries [sic] a while longer—until economic improvement makes it possible for the South to truly rise again. But there is no place for them in this proud old university.

We want no “underground” of Gowries here.<sup>12</sup>

Faulkner also describes the religious and professional forces acquiescing to racism. Piety and militancy share the same church pew: Lucas cannot be lynched immediately because “They’re burying Vinson this afternoon and to burn a nigger right while the funeral’s going on wouldn’t be respectful to Vinson” (40). The Southerner’s religious dogma provides the moral basis for his faith in white supremacy.

The lawyer Gavin Stevens personifies the professional who remains silent instead of restraining the militants. He furthers segregation by arguing that the South must be allowed the privilege of reforming itself at its own speed and in its own way. Though enlightened about the grotesqueness of white supremacy, Gavin defends the system when he refuses to support federal enforcement of civil liberties.

Gavin’s prejudice surfaces when he questions Lucas in the jail. Rather than starting with the premise that Lucas is innocent, the lawyer automatically assumes that the Negro must be guilty, and recommends that Lucas throw himself upon the mercy of the court. Gavin’s advice shows the limitations of his vision, for what mercy can there be for Lucas when the populace wishes to hang him? Lucas, therefore, dismisses Gavin, realizing that the burden of justice must be carried by those not indoctrinated in the ritual of white supremacy.

However, very much aware of the Negro’s suffering, Gavin realizes

that reform is necessary. He is willing to go a short distance for suffrage, believing, "Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame" (206). Lawyer Stevens is one of a large number of Southerners who wish for the impossible. He wants to see the Negro treated as an equal, but he longs for the South to retain its antiquated institutions. Prejudice often invokes contradictions. Gavin exposes the vices of superstition and prejudice, not realizing that he is himself crippled by these same beliefs. He criticizes Mr. Lilley:

All he requires is that they act like niggers. Which is exactly what Lucas is doing: blew his top and murdered a white man—which Mr. Lilley is probably convinced all Negroes want to do—and now the white people will take him out and burn him, all regular and in order. . . . Which proves again how no man can cause more grief than the one clinging blindly to the vices of his ancestors. (48-49)

Gavin's vice is his endorsement of states' rights, which prolongs the Negro's debasement. Stevens rejects any interference in a problem which he thinks the South must solve alone. His screed in defense of states' rights exposes the core of the white man's dilemma. It transforms the lawyer into a contemporary John C. Calhoun, torn between two conflicting loyalties.

I'm defending Lucas Beauchamp. I'm defending Sambo from the North and East and West—the outlanders who will fling him decades back not merely into injustice but into grief and agony and violence too by forcing on us laws based on the idea that man's injustice to man can be abolished overnight by police. (203-204)

Silver verifies that Gavin's feelings speak for most Mississippians:

I have recently read again *Intruder in the Dust* and I recognize that the quote you have from Gavin Stevens is representative of the thinking of Mississippi. It is also true that Faulkner realized, before his death, that southerners would never really give up segregation without outside force.<sup>13</sup>

In 1948 Faulkner was far more accurate about the South's sensitivity to states' rights than were those critics who condemned his troubled visions, admonishing him for his character portrayal of the Mississippi lawyer. One critic says, "The Uncle delivers absurd, strident lectures written with frantic bad taste (use of Sambo) and a flippant effort in the direction of political satire."<sup>14</sup> That Mississippi lawyers would assume a states' rights stand when confronted with a federal-state conflict vindicates Faulkner's characterization. As Silver demonstrates, there are limitations on one's freedom of action in Mississippi. "Mississippi's lawyers are not necessarily contemptuous of the Supreme Court but they are members of a closed social order."<sup>15</sup> The lawyer admittedly has an attitude of supremacy toward the Negro as

have most white men, and his arguments reflect those arguments advocated by Southern intellectuals. To declare that Faulkner writes with "bad taste" is to demand that the Mississippi lawyer speak like a liberated man which he is not.

Other remarks by the lawyer display Faulkner's sense of the complexity of integration in the South. "I only say that the injustice is ours, the South's. We must expiate and abolish it ourselves, alone and without help nor even (with thanks) advice" (204). Edmund Wilson comments,

But, the other side may object: The South will never get around to doing anything for the Negro. Your policy, the South retorts, is dangerous, in any case: it will give rise to "a people divided (Faulkner thus seems to take it for granted that if Washington tries to back the Negroes, it will arouse the whole South to resistance) at a time when history is still showing us that the anteroom to dissolution is division."<sup>16</sup>

But he makes a judgment typical of those removed from the Southern temperament. If Wilson means that he disagrees with Faulkner's belief that the Deep South and Washington will resort to force, then history has proven the accuracy of the artist's imagination and foresight.

Although it is in the characterization of Gavin Stevens that critics find Faulkner most vulnerable as an artist, I submit that the fictitious lawyer represents the complex individuals whom Silver identifies as "The Voices of Acquiescence." The most interesting aspects of Gavin's character are his predictions: federal intervention over civil rights will probably occur; the South will fight it; violence will erupt; all classes will oppose federalism; and if left alone, the South will solve the racial problem by itself. In these statements one finds a prophetic vision of cause and effect which guides Mississippi along the ominous path it followed the next fourteen years. True to the plight of those Mississippians of good will, Gavin's dilemma renders him a powerless Hamlet unable to make a decisive moral judgment.

Faulkner's dramatization of segregation ranges even beyond Silver's exploration of the malevolent tradition. Before Silver publicly denounced racism, Faulkner condemned the rancor Mississippians displayed toward the independent Lucas Beauchamp. Lucas, a progeny of miscegenation, is the symbolic victim of Mississippi justice: if a black man was thought guilty of murdering a white man, a lynching replaced a trial. Ironically, if Lucas is killed, the white men will, in actuality, commit a crime against "white" blood. In effect, an injustice to a Negro, the artist implies, is an injustice against humanity.

When thought guilty of the Gowrie murder, Lucas is deemed unworthy of a trial, and the innocent man is to be lynched by his ignorant, crude white inferiors. Refusing to accept the inferior status enforced

by the whites and acknowledged by other Negroes, Lucas is the prototype of a later generation of Negroes who are destined to demand equality.

It is Lucas' self-esteem, his rejection of racial myths, which gain him both rancor and recognition. His refusal to accept payment for rescuing Chick explodes the youth's beliefs about Negro inferiority and self-abasement; his independence wins him the animosity of Negroes and whites seeking to maintain the status quo. "Lucas is neither at home in the South, like Dilsey, nor homeless, like Joe Christmas; he exists in himself . . . he rejects white society but does not rebel against it . . . he ignores it."<sup>17</sup> This description of Lucas' position is largely accurate, yet it is incorrect to say that Lucas does not rebel against the closed society; a Negro who ignores segregation in Mississippi rejects it, as the whites' violent reactions attest. His rebellion is not very different from that of the martyred civil rights worker Medgar Evers. Both risked grave consequences for their convictions, and Silver's panegyric for Evers applies to Lucas. "Here was a man who knew precisely how much he was risking and why, and who had the courage and ultimate intelligence to do so. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

Faulkner dramatically implies that Negroes must take the initial steps toward acquiring their freedom. He realizes that Negroes must sacrifice more to achieve their goals. Except for Aleck Sanders, few other Negroes in the novel share Lucas' courage. They meekly accept their fate and eschew Lucas for exposing them to the wrath of white supremacy. "The 'good' Negro was the least likely to be maltreated for he had learned that militancy against the code would bring swift reprisal."<sup>19</sup> One bigot's threat expresses the usual reaction, "Keep walking around here with that look on your face and what you'll be is crowbait" (19). No wonder Negroes aren't seen once the news of Lucas' crime becomes common knowledge. The code of justice is stated poignantly by one of Faulkner's characters. "Ain't you heard about the new lynch law the Yankees passed? The folks that lynches the nigger is supposed to dig the grave?" (139) The dangers are real. The threat to the Negro's very existence is symbolized by the southern jail. Appropriately, the jail is one of the most important structures in Jefferson (the Confederate monument and the court house are the others), standing as the emblem of white supremacy. Faulkner's jail is an unforgettable metaphor demonstrating the extent of southern injustice, which the historian's research concurs.<sup>20</sup>

Faulkner's objective portrayal of the Negro's existence points out the destructive consequences of racism. The Negroes in the novel work hard but have little food and barely subsist. One is astounded by the conditions of their unpainted one-room cabins, calling to mind eighteenth-century frontier America: the homes are unheated, plumbing doesn't exist—all the conveniences of modern living are denied them. Therefore it is not accidental that the indomitable Lucas Beauchamp

owns land in the heart of the old plantation. This and other inherited possessions—watch, gold toothpick and so on—undoubtedly give him the economic stability which permits him to be independent, self-reliant, proud. *Intruder* testifies that rehabilitation of the Negro is an economic proposition, that identity and social responsibility begin with economic independence.

The most complex character in the novel is sixteen year old Chick Mallison. He is confronted with a moral dilemma of whether to accept Lucas Beauchamp as a human being or to leave the old man's fate to the will of the closed society. Chick responds with aid to Lucas, but thereafter the influential voice of his conscience diminishes in proportion to the development of Southern loyalties. One solitary act does not represent the wave of the future.

To some extent a regeneration of sensitivity does come in the growth of Chick's understanding. Chick's vision is not blinded by the precepts taught about the idyllic past. But as a boy reared under the dogma of discrimination, Chick does share many of the South's prejudices. "*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).

This early statement concerning Lucas is retracted after Chick's moral and social evolution. The possibilities of Chick's growth and development are reflected in the given name Chick, which implies youth. The omission of the one "l" in the surname spells *malison*, a word which implies a curse. The combination of the two words suggests a dualism between the youthful innocence of the boy and the aged curse of supersition and false institutions which he inherits. Chick's dilemma—the choice between treating Lucas as an equal or as society dictates—commences when he becomes indebted to Lucas for getting him out of an icy creek, feeding him and sending him home. Chick's cold dunking symbolizes his awakening to the reality of southern life—an awakening to the suffering of the Negro. He becomes skeptical of the stereotyped views about the Negro, and he develops a questioning mind which eventually drives him to set Lucas free.

During the four years of Chick's acquaintance with Lucas, a liberalizing process occurs within Chick. In this time span, Chick's uncle aids him in gathering evidence about the Negro which obliterates the myths of the closed society. An important experience occurs when the youth discovers that the Negro is emotionally upset because of the death of his beloved wife Molly: "thinking with a kind of amazement: He was grieving. *You don't have to not be a nigger in order to grieve . . .*" (25). The bond which has been growing between the old Negro and the young man becomes evident when Lucas is jailed. "And he stood in an almost unbearable surge not merely of outrage but of rage, looking down at the face which for the first time, defenceless at last

for a moment, revealed its age. . . ” (58). Thus Chick finally acknowledges Lucas’ human qualities.

However, Chick’s shame over the militancy of the closed society appears to Gavin Stevens as a rejection of the South. Subsequently Chick accepts the spurious truth that his primary obligation is to the South’s heritage. He asks forgiveness for his radicalism.

Thus Chick reprimands himself for too hastily condemning his fellow Mississippians. He argues that they, and they alone, must free the Negro (for the preservation of their moral regeneration). Gavin and Chick see all southerners united against their common enemy, the Federal Government, although the opposition was less broad than they imagined.

*When no people dare risk division by using federal laws and federal police to abolish Lucas’ shameful condition, there may not be in any random one thousand Southerners one who really grieves or even is really concerned over that condition nevertheless neither is there always one who would himself lynch Lucas no matter what the occasion yet not one of that nine hundred ninety-nine plus that other first one making the thousand whole again would hesitate to repulse with force (and one would still be that lyncher) the outlander who came down here with force to intervene or punish him. . . .* (215)

A paralyzing duality exists within Chick. By seeing the Negro as a human being he rises above the myth and superstition of his peers. On the other hand, Chick defends the Southern culture over any concentrated federal effort to release the Negro. When the two contradicting beliefs are combined, we see that the young man will do more for the Negro than any previous generation; however, he will fall short of what needs to be done, and what is expected by the Negro. Chick becomes the prototype of what the new generation might *have* done if given enough time, but it is obvious that duty and tradition will demand that the time be *far* in the future.

As I have shown, Faulkner was aware of the road Mississippi was doomed to follow. That Chick and Gavin decided to follow the path their ancestors trod, he leaves no doubt; that the Negro’s fate remains perilous even after the white’s liberalizing gestures, Faulkner is aware. “Lucas challenges a good many of the notions Faulkner has previously expressed about Negroes. . . . Lucas insists upon taking the white man’s gesture of equality as if it came from condescension—and who will flatly contradict him?”<sup>21</sup>

In 1948 William Faulkner’s novel emitted the clearest prognosis of the future course of Mississippi’s states’ rights policy.<sup>22</sup> *Intruder in the Dust* stressed the Negro’s need for self-respect and warned the American public that the Negro’s quest for freedom would not be without peril. Well aware that segregation was a national disgrace, Faulkner neverthe-

less emphasized that in the South states' rights superseded human rights. He remarked prophetically that "your Chicagos and Detroit and Los Angeles" are also adamantly opposed to racial reforms. Faulkner himself advocated individual reform as the solution to racial strife, wishing to reeducate blacks and whites alike, and this philosophy explains his unwillingness to support other reform methods—although he was the realist who recognized how little time remained.

Faulkner sought to write a futuristic novel of faith. His poetic imagination led him to fear the southern consciousness, even as his own awareness emphasized Mississippi's good intentions. Consequently, within the novel's drama is the searing conflict between Faulkner the artist and Faulkner the loyal Mississippian. The result is a novel which history shows to be a microcosm of the myriad attitudes that blacks and whites have toward one another. *Intruder in the Dust* deserves recognition as a visionary effort which foresaw the agony of attempting to unlock the doors and windows of the closed society.

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### footnotes

1. Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: The South, the Negro, and Time," *Faulkner*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), 271.

2. William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (New York, 1948), hereafter abbreviated *Intruder*. Page numbers will be enclosed in parentheses after quotations from the novel.

3. James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York, 1964), hereafter abbreviated *Mississippi*.

4. Silver, *Mississippi*, Introduction, xiii.

5. *Ibid.*, 19.

6. *Ibid.*, 34.

7. *Ibid.*, 145.

8. *Ibid.*, 84.

9. *Ibid.*, 141.

10. *Ibid.*, 154.

11. Robert Penn Warren sees Faulkner as an apolitical writer. Warren postulates that "Faulkner has almost entirely omitted, not only a treatment of the subject politics, but references to it." Warren, *Faulkner*, 17.

12. *The Mississippi Collection*, The University of Mississippi Library, University of Mississippi (Oxford, October, 1961).

13. Silver, Letter to Chancellor John D. Williams, University of Mississippi, *Mississippi*, 211.

14. Elizabeth Hardwick, "Faulkner and the South Today," *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, eds. Frederick Hoffman and Olga Vickery (East Lansing, 1951), 245.

15. Silver, *Mississippi*, 49.

16. Edmund Wilson, *Classics and Commercial* (New York, 1950), 468. Wilson's analysis of Gavin's speech is accurate; especially perceptive is the response to Gavin's criticism of American culture.

17. Irving Howe, "William Faulkner and the Negro," *Commentary*, XII (October, 1951), 365.

18. Silver, *Mississippi*, 89.

19. *Ibid.*, 85.

20. "The doctrine of white supremacy is guarded by a bureaucracy, by ceaseless, high-powered and skillful indoctrination employing both persuasion and fear and by the elimination, without regard for law or ethics, of those who will not go along. Within its own borders the

closed society of Mississippi comes as near to approximating a police state as anything we have yet seen in America." *Ibid.*, 151.

21. Howe, "Faulkner," 366.

22. Faulkner stressed the Negro's right to equal opportunity, despite the oft-quoted remarks of his in the *Reporter* (critics seldom refer to Faulkner's letters denying the veracity of that interview). For those controversial statements, look at Russell Warren Howe's "A Talk With William Faulkner," *The Reporter*, XIV (March 22, 1956).