

Faulkner and Racism

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The single most indelible fact about William Faulkner's work is his persistent concentration on observing and recording the culture and country in which he was born; what is most striking now, as we look back on his legacy from our own, is the enormous courage and cost of that task. Faulkner's Lafayette County, in northeastern Mississippi, not far from the battle sites of Brice's Cross Roads, Corinth, and Shiloh, is still marked in its town squares with statues of soldiers of the Confederate Army of the United States, in full battle dress and, more often than not, facing South towards the homeland they mean to protect with their lives. But what for Faulkner is most haunting is not the communal psychology of war so much as the agonizing recognition of the exacting expenses of racism, for him the most difficult and most grievous awareness of all. Racism spreads contagiously through his works, unavoidably. Its force is often debilitating; its consequences often beyond reckoning openly. The plain recognition of racism is hardest to bear and yet most necessary to confront.

Perhaps the most powerful scene in Faulkner's writing which centers on a black, and unforgettable for anyone who has read it, is the sermon the Reverend Shegog from St. Louis preaches on Easter Sunday April 8, 1928, in the last section of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). The Reverend Shegog juxtaposes three iconic pictures of Christ: the baby threatened by Herod, the man betrayed by Pilate, and the triumphant Lord who suffered on the Cross. Shegog's narrative of Christ's life, while biblically universal, is in its calculated delivery at this place clearly the history of black slavery writ personally and biblically. It is also, by no coincidence, written in blood, Christ's narrative at its bloodiest moments despite his urging the annealing power of that bloodshed. Under his

powerful sway, readers like his congregation may forget that the story he tells is the white man's cultural heritage, not Shegog's, and in transporting all of them into tongues he also reduces his own language to a primitive sound and ritual: the scene takes on darker and darker meanings as we contemplate it. Dilsey nevertheless seems transformed. "I've seed de first en de last," she says,¹ but she cannot explain what the first and last are; Benjy remains unchanged; and Frony reverts to her embarrassed social consciousness: "'Whyn't you quit dat, mammy?' Frony said. 'Why all dese people lookin. We be passin white folks soon'" (297). Dilsey's reconciling tears seem out of place for Frony and for her fellow parishioners. What are we to make of this? Perhaps a great deal: in the last pages of the novel, Frony is proven right, not Dilsey. Nothing has changed. The blacks remain servants, and often servile, to the whites.

But Faulkner has already told us this. His initial portrait of Dilsey in the fourth section—based in part on his own black mammy Caroline Barr—is anything but heroic as she exits from her cabin. She is not defeated by her life, but clearly it has worn her down and worn her out. Consumed, ruined, on the day of resurrection Dilsey is herself only a skeleton, her sagging skin pointedly displaying how she is exhausted, diminished by her life. Her first decision, once outdoors, is to turn around and go back from where she came, circling back to her immediate beginning as the larger novel, in the end, circles back to "post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (321). In the following pages, as she hauls in firewood, toils up the stairs with a hot water bottle, scolds her grandson and feeds the thirty-three-year-old suffering from Downs Syndrome, her every gesture remains that of the traditional mammy: her outreach is imprisoned in duties dictated by past legacy. Her glory is to serve, but she serves not the Lord in this novel but the deteriorating Compson family in their rotting house. She evokes for us, then, a kind of fatality that seems both to sadden and to undermine any claim she may have on our sense of heroism. She invokes enormous pity but insufficient terror. The racism which Faulkner exhibits here is, I think, profoundly subtle and profoundly deep, and wholly unintended. But Faulkner's admiration for Dilsey betrays him.

That portrait, however, is a significant step forward for Faulkner as he came, through his writing, to understand ever more deeply the forces

and characteristics of racism. His first novel of Yoknapatawpha, *Flags in the Dust* (1973; as *Sartoris*, 1929), shows more openly the pressures and shapes of the culture that formed him. There the blacks are characterized by the Strother family—a father who swindles the people of his parish by gambling their savings, a son who lies about his heroism during World War I, and the wife and mother who sees her own race betraying itself in the song she sings:

*"Sinner riz fum de moaner's bench,
 Sinner jump to de penance bench;
 When de preacher ax'im whut de reason why,
 Says 'Preacher got de women jes' de same ez I'.
 Oh, Lawd, Oh Lawd!
 Dat's whut de matter wid de church today."*²

In time, though, Faulkner reveals that Elnora Strother sings mainly about herself, for she is her own worst example of sin, having surrendered to the white Colonel Sartoris to produce a mulatto, and bastard, son. And Faulkner goes even further. Depicting servitude and endurance in *Flags in the Dust*, he calls for "Some Cincinnatus of the cotton fields [to] contemplate the lowly destiny, some Homer [who] should sing the saga, of the mule and of his place in the South," that lazy worker which "with its trace-galled flanks and flopping, lifeless ears, and its half-closed eyes drowsing venomously behind pale lids, apparently asleep with . . . its own motion" is both "Outcast and pariah" and "Ugly, untiring, and perverse . . . Misunderstood even by that creature [the nigger who drives him] whose impulses and mental processes most closely resemble his" (313-14). This suddenly illuminating and awful analogy, itself perverse, suggests more strikingly than elsewhere in Faulkner the racial attitudes he had to overcome to present Dilsey Gibson with some measure of dignity and respect.

There is a much keener racial awareness at work ten years later, however, in Faulkner's novel of the war of Northern aggression, *The Unvanquished* (1938). This novel at times works more indirectly, though, as if Faulkner was himself still shy at showing racist thought, racist tension, and racist tragedy. There is, for instance, the slave Loosh's proud

betrayal of the white Sartoris family, based on Faulkner's own ancestors, when he steals their family's heirloom silver which they have taught him to hide from marauding Yankee soldiers. Granny sees him leaving the plantation. In the words of an older Bayard, looking back on the event,

He was coming up from his cabin, with a bundle on his shoulder tied up in a bandanna and Philadelphia behind him, and his face looked like it had that night last summer when Ringo and I looked into the window and saw him after he came back from seeing the Yankees. Granny stopped fighting. She said, "Loosh."

He stopped and looked at her; he looked like he was asleep, like he didn't even see us or was seeing something we couldn't. But Philadelphia saw us; she cringed back behind him, looking at Granny. "I tried to stop him, Miss Rosa," she said. "Fore God I tried."

"Loosh," Granny said. "Are you going too?"

"Yes," Loosh said. "I going. I done been freed; God's own angel proclaimed me free and gonter general me to Jordan. I dont belong to John Sartoris now; I belongs to me and God."

"But the silver belongs to John Sartoris," Granny said. "Who are you to give it away?"

"You ax me that?" Loosh said. "Where John Sartoris? Whyn't he come and ax me that? Let God ax John Sartoris who the man name that give me to him. Let the man that buried me in the black dark ax that of the man what dug me free." He wasn't looking at us; I don't think he could even see us. He went on.

"Fore God, Miss Rosa," Philadelphia said. "I tried to stop him. I done tried."

"Dont you go, Philadelphia," Granny said. "Dont you know he's leading you into misery and starvation?"

Philadelphia began to cry. "I knows hit. I knows whut they tole him cant be true. But he my husband. I reckon I got to go with him."

They went on.³

The older Bayard discerns more because the younger Bayard sensed more than the older grandmother, acculturated to black slavery. The point is underscored once more when Granny, meeting an aging mother left behind with her baby, tells her to return home—to her plantation—which the black woman will no longer acknowledge (84-85) as she struggles too to cross Jordan (in the actual Mississippi landscape, the Tallahatchie, which will take her north into Tennessee).

Granny's intractable racism is continually the novel's subtext. She befriends a black slave boy Ringo because he refuses to leave the Sartoris family—something Bayard works free enough to recognize only in the final episode of the novel, "An Odor of Verbena"—and with Ringo's imaginative plan and support she swindles Yankees of mules and horses, sells them back for a profit, and distributes the illegal profits of her own war of Southern aggression at the local church.

Last summer when we got back with the first batch of mules from Alabama, Granny sent for them, sent out word back into the hills where they lived in dirt-floored cabins, on the little poor farms without slaves. It took three or four times to get them to come in, but at last they all came—men and women and children and the dozen niggers that had got free by accident and didn't know what to do about it—I reckon this was the first church with a slave gallery some of them had ever seen, with Ringo and the other twelve sitting up there in the high shadows where there was room enough for two hundred; and I could remember back when Father would be in the pew with us and the grove outside would be full of carriages from the other plantations, and Doctor Worsham in his stole beneath the altar and for each white person in the auditorium there would be ten niggers in the gallery. And I reckon that on the first Sunday when Granny knelt down in public, it was the first time they had ever seen anyone kneel in a church. (134-35)

In the larger narration, Bayard's fixation on Granny's heroism and generosity erases the fact that she plays the role of a plantation overseer when there is no plantation left, and that Ringo, who has in fact gotten her contraband for her and thus preserved her dignity and delusion, is relegated now to the slave balcony with all the other unknown, ignorant blacks. Faulkner's model here is the College Hill Presbyterian Church, in the plantation section of his county near where he was married which I visited only a few months ago. The doors of that slave balcony are still visible on the outside church walls. What is gone is the outside ladder by which the slaves could climb to the balcony outside the church and sit to hear the sermon entirely enclosed so they never saw the service and their white slaveowners never saw them. Granny forces Ringo to this position, too, forces him back into the posture of a prewar slave.

The scenes of Granny with Loosh, with the freed mother, and in the church are all deeply ironic, unlike *Flags in the Dust* and *The Sound and the Fury*, but Faulkner has earned this ability to confront the legacy of racism, even in characters based on his own family (who also owned slaves) in two earlier works, *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). In *Light in August*, Joe Christmas has no clear identity because he does not know what race he belongs to: he passes as a white boy in an orphanage because of his light skin yet the dietitian there calls him a nigger. Forced into the role of an outcast from both races, he is driven to make love to a white woman who, as the daughter of abolitionists, is herself an outcast in Yoknapatawpha. When she is found murdered, nearly decapitated, it is likely he committed the act, overcome with shame and guilt at their behavior, although we never witness the actual crime. Faulkner is here confronting and incorporating the actual crime of Nelse Patton, the most famous crime at the time in his own Lafayette County. According to the *Lafayette County Press* for 9 September 1908,

One of the coldest blooded murders and most brutal crimes known to the criminal world was perpetrated one mile north of town yesterday morning about ten o'clock, when a black brute of unsavory reputation by the name of Nelse Patton attacked Mrs. Mattie McMullen, a respected white woman, with a razor, cutting her throat from ear to ear and causing almost instant death.

Racing through a ditch in the middle of Faulkner's home town of Oxford, Patton was pursued by over a hundred men who shot him before he fell and was taken to jail. According to a participant, John B. Cullen, then fifteen years old, who was the first to shoot at Patton,

The news spread over the county like wildfire, and that night at least two thousand people gathered around the jail. Judge Roan came out on the porch and made a plea to the crowd that they let the law take its course. Then Senator W. V. Sullivan made a fiery speech, telling the mob that they would be weaklings and cowards to let such a vicious beast live until morning. Mr. Hartsfield, the sheriff, had left town with the keys to the jail, because he knew people would take them from him. My father was deputized to guard the jail. Had he the slightest doubt of Nelse's guilt, he would have talked to the mob. If this had not proved successful, they would have entered the jail over his

dead body. After Senator Sullivan's speech, the mob began pitching us boys through the jail windows, and no guard in that jail would have dared shoot one of us. Soon a mob was inside. My brother and I held my father, and the sons of the other guards held theirs. They weren't hard to hold anyway. In this way we took over the lower floor of the jail.

From eight o'clock that night until two in the morning the mob worked to cut through the jail walls into the cells with sledge hammers and crowbars [taken from nearby hardware and blacksmith shops]. In the walls were one-by-eight boards placed on top of one another and bolted together. The walls were brick on the outside and steel-lined on the inside. When the mob finally got through and broke the lock of the murderer's cell, Nelse had armed himself with a heavy iron coal-shovel handle. From a corner near the door, he fought like a tiger, seriously wounding three men. He was then shot to death and thrown out of the jail. Someone (I don't know who) cut his ears off, scalped him, cut his testicles out, tied a rope around his neck, tied him to a car, and dragged his body around the streets. Then they hanged him to a walnut-tree limb just outside the south entrance to the courthouse. They had torn his clothes off dragging him around, and my father bought a new pair of overalls and put them on him before the next morning.⁴

bought a new pair, that is, because he would not dress a black man in a white man's trousers.

The incident was, at the time of *Light in August*, the most notorious incident in Faulkner's county. But what he does with it is doubly surprising. First, he turns Joe's death into a miraculous apotheosis, quite unlike the extant descriptions of Nelse Patton's death.

He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatening, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant. Again from the town, deadened a little by the walls, the scream of the siren mounted toward its unbelievable crescendo, passing out of the realm of hearing.⁵

This is an astonishing psychological transfer: Faulkner has buried the horror of the actual event with a kind of magical poetry that at once dilutes the event and renders it less harmful while making Faulkner both innocent and apparently honest in the telling of it. He divorces himself from the individual, and effectively from the cultural, responsibility. He, at least, is home free. Or is he? For an explanation of what happened to cause Joe's death, he introduces a highly educated lawyer, Gavin Stevens. According to Gavin, a woman who claims to be Joe's grandmother tells him that her white daughter eloped with a Mexican of mixed blood and together they produced Joe; that therefore it was

those successions of thirty years before . . . which had put that stain either on his white blood [as guilt] or his black blood [as shame], whichever you will, and which killed him. But he must have run with believing it for a while; anyway, with hope. But his blood would not be quiet, let him save [himself]. 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 [defrocked, helpless] minister, which rising in him for the last and final time, sent him against all reason and all reality, into the embrace of a chimaera, 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 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 in crises all his life. (448-49)

Often seen by critics as Faulkner's surrogate, Gavin is incredulously reductive and racist; all passion and ignorance stems from black blood, all hope and salvation from white. The determinism here, condemning the mulatto while freeing the pure white man of any involvement, is frightening.

But, having in the end of *Light in August*, addressed race directly through the metaphor of a character of unknown lineage, Faulkner was now able to address the most pressing racial issue—that of miscegenation which, at some point, he learned had actually been present in both his

paternal and maternal ancestors.⁶ *Absalom, Absalom!* is about the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen, a stranger to Yoknapatawpha who arrives suddenly, with an army of slaves, builds a plantation on a hundred acres of land, and then falters in founding the dynasty he plans. The question the novel raises is why his son Henry shot Charles Bon and, in turn, why Thomas Sutpen failed. In his admiration for Charles at the University of Mississippi, Henry brings him home to meet his sister Judith and in time Charles and Judith plan to marry. Subsequently, Henry learns that Charles is a bigamist, or so he thinks, and excuses him for his misdemeanor. Then he learns that Charles is in fact his own half-brother by his father's first wife, so that marriage to Judith would be incest. That is more difficult to accept, but also, in time, bearable. Then, at last, Charles tells Henry why his father had disowned him and his mother and remarried: Thomas Sutpen's first wife had turned out to be black. It is this that Henry cannot accept. At a final confrontation at Shiloh, where brothers are killing brothers in the War Between the States, Charles insists on leaving the war to marry Judith unless Henry stops him by shooting him.

Henry looks at the pistol; now he is not only panting, he is trembling, when he speaks now his voice is not even the exhalation, it is the suffused and suffocating inbreath itself:

—You are my brother.

—No I'm not. I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry.

Suddenly Henry grasps the pistol, jerks it free of Bon's hand and stands so, the pistol in his hand, panting and panting; again Bon can see the whites of his introlled eyes while he sits on the log and watches Henry with that faint expression about the eyes and mouth which might be smiling.

—Do it now, Henry, he says.

Henry whirls; in the same motion he hurls the pistol from him and stoops again, gripping Bon by both shoulders, panting.

—You shall not! he says—You shall not!⁷

For Henry and in turn for Quentin Compson who nearly fifty years later tells the story, miscegenation is more unbearable than bigamy or even incest: blood itself is what is most desired and feared. Quentin's roommate at Harvard understands: the potency and endurance of blacks will in time prove superior, and will in time erase pure white lineage

and superiority. "So it takes two niggers to get rid of one [white] Sutpen, dont it?" he asks Quentin and then predicts the future:

"I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it wont quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they wont show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be [the sole black descendant of the Sutpens] Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings. Now I want you to tell me one thing more. Why do you hate the South?"

"I don't hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; "I dont hate it," he said. *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark. *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!* (302-03)

In *Absalom, Absalom!* Henry Sutpen as Faulkner's surrogate has learned, to his horror, how deeply his own racism penetrates, how difficult it is to overcome, and how destructive it is to his pride and love of his region.

Go Down, Moses (1942) is the direct sequel to *Absalom, Absalom!*; it is Faulkner's second most painful and agonizing novel because it shows the consequences to man and culture when the present is built on a past of miscegenation—of the dominance and possession of blacks in which slavery before the War still dictates the values of a culture. The novel, named for a gospel song that is a cry for a redeemer for blacks, traces a new aristocratic family on a plantation in Yoknapatawpha, but the McCaslins, like the Sutpens, are guilty of miscegenation. In fact, when Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin impregnates his own daughter by a slave woman, the girl's mother commits suicide in an icy creek at Christmas. This awful fact, duly recorded in the plantation ledgers—which measure the blacks as property bought and sold, lost and found—is one which baffles Lucius' sons Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy. They deny their father's involvement in Eunice's death. In addition, they welcome her grandson, Tomey's Turl, their mulatto half-brother, but they treat him at times like a slave, hunting him like their pet fox. When one of them is in danger of marriage he does not want, they gamble their half-brother against the end of bachelorhood. This episode is called "Was" and told as if it were a harmless tell tale, but the race relations it attempts to disguise are painfully evident and the title deeply ironic.

Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy salve their conscience by giving their former black slaves their big house and moving into slave quarters. But they lock their servants up each night at the front door, allowing them to escape out of the back so long as they are home in the morning to be let out the front door again: that is, they deny the fact of slavery but practice all the facets of it. Nor does their kindness extend to cash, for they take the \$1000 their father left for his three black children and merely triple the legacy and pass it on in turn to the next generation—to Ike McCaslin. Ike's attempt to pay off the past is frustrated: one son claims the money himself, a second son cannot be found, and the daughter refuses the money: I am free, she tells Ike from her unproductive farm in Arkansas. To find her, Ike says, he travels like the Magi, insinuating holiness and grace in the mission. His arrogance continues when he chooses to relinquish tainted money and plantation while living off his cousin who does maintain the plantation with its black labor force.

Go Down, Moses does not arrange its episodes chronologically but instead dramatically. If, however, we rearrange the chapters in chronological order, we will find three occur in the simultaneous present of 1941. "Pantaloons in Black" tells of Rider, a black worker on the McCaslin plantation who is victimized by crooked white bootleggers and dicemen. In exposing them, he is lynched. In a second episode, "Delta Autumn," Ike is confronted by a woman who wishes to marry his nephew and acknowledge their child. But when she tells Ike her aunt took in washing, he knows she is black and that miscegenation has returned to the family. She rises above this but Ike cannot. In the third contemporaneous episode, itself called "Go Down, Moses," it is Gavin Stevens who fails. When the last black of the McCaslin line is executed for crimes in Chicago, his grandmother, married to Ike's mulatto uncle, asks that he be brought home and given a proper burial and an obituary in the local paper (although, illiterate, she cannot read it), Gavin is moved to call on her and apologize for his white race. She will have none of it.

"Roth Edmonds sold him," the old Negress said. She swayed back and forth in the chair. "Sold my Benjamin."

"Hush," [the white elderly] Miss Worsham said. "Hush, Mollie. Hush now."
 "No," Stevens said. "No, he didn't, Aunt Mollie. It wasn't Mr. Edmonds. Mr. Edmonds didn't—" *But she cant hear me*, he thought. She was not even looking at him. She never had looked at him.
 "Sold my Benjamin," she said. "Sold him in Egypt . . . Sold him to Pharaoh."⁸

Pharaoh, in Mollie's apt and brilliant aperçu, is Roth Edmonds who sold young Butch into slavery by making him a victim of a white supremacy and attracting him to white materialism. He sold this freed black relative every bit as much as if these were antebellum days and an actual slave auction was being held. Gavin does not see what Miss Worsham and Mollie Beauchamp both know: that slavery has never really left Yoknapatawpha; it has just gone underground. Miscegenation perpetuates slavery indefinitely because it extends the slaveowner's attitudes. What is racially reprehensible from before the War of Northern Invasion is now less reprehensible only because it has grown more subterranean.

Nor has much changed since Faulkner's death in 1962. When visiting his home town early in 1993, I found no copy of *USA Today* available as usual. I later discovered why. The only story in the issue for Friday, January 22, under "Mississippi" read:

Water Valley—3 men face a hearing today in Justice Court on charges they attempted to hang Larry Simmons, 30, in an automobile shop Jan. 11. Simmons said the men put a chain around his neck and pulled him off the ground for a brief time.

The paper does not say that Simmons was black and his persecutors white, but it did not need to. (Water Valley is twelve miles south of Faulkner's Oxford, and is the model for Mottstown in *The Sound and the Fury*.) On Sunday, February 21, 1993, *The New York Times* published this story from Mendenhall, Mississippi:

They found the body of Andre Jones hanging in a dank jailhouse shower stall, a black shoelace from his gray Air Jordan sneakers forming a noose around his neck, a day before he was supposed to start college at Alcorn State University.

State and Federal officials have ruled it a suicide, committed, they say, by a young man who was probably despondent about being caught driving a stolen vehicle and facing the prospect of going to prison. His family and supporters call it a lynching disguised as a suicide.

And they say it is only one of many committed in the jails of a state where the terror of Jim Crow and the civil rights eras lives on in new forms. Civil rights groups and the United States Civil Rights Commission have called for a Federal investigation into Mr. Jones's death as well as those of 21 other blacks in Mississippi jails in recent years, all of them deaths by hanging.

The state of Mississippi could not ban this newspaper story, although they did temporarily ban the showing of the movie *Mississippi Burning* about the deaths of three Northern civil rights workers who attempted to register the blacks as voters not, I think, because the film focuses on racial prejudice but because it portrays a South terrified of and unable to change despite its own best intentions.

Faulkner struggled with this culture, and this heritage, all his life. In his last years, he spoke up in newspaper letters against the punishment of blacks which he thought excessive. He lost the friendships he had and the recognition of his own brother and much of his family. Still he wrote publicly about the need to integrate local schools. At the same time, he wrote in *Ebony* magazine of all places, the leading black national magazine published in the North, an argument that precisely echoes Ike McCaslin in "Delta Autumn": he argued that the South should go slowly and independently on matters of race, taking perhaps a hundred, perhaps a thousand years to assimilate everyone into a single race. Like Henry Sutpen and Gavin Stevens, he often wanted more than he himself could supply.

But he never stopped trying. He died just two months before James Meredith attempted to be the first black student to enter the University of Mississippi, whose campus was contiguous with Faulkner's property. We can guess where, painfully, Faulkner would have stood on the Meredith case. Yet just a few years earlier, he had also told the British journalist Russell Warren Howe that he would have to shoot blacks if a riot occurred. For Faulkner battled with race and racism, publicly and privately, as few other American authors have ever done or ever had to do. He was still battling when he died, living, quite consciously, what

he had finally come to terms with in an essay for *Holiday* magazine in 1954: "Loving all of it even while he had to hate some of it because he knows now that you dont love because: you love despite; not for the virtues, but despite the faults."⁹

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NOTES

¹*The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Vintage International, 1990) 297.

²*Flags in the Dust* (New York: Vintage, 1974) 25.

³*The Unvanquished* (New York: Vintage International, 1991) 74-75.

⁴*Old Times in the Faulkner Country* in collaboration with Floyd C. Watkins (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1961) 91-92.

⁵*Light in August* (New York: Vintage International, 1990) 464-65.

⁶As shown in detail by Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1993) esp. Part One.

⁷*Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Vintage International, 1990) 286.

⁸*Go Down, Moses* (New York: Vintage International, 1990) 362.

⁹As reprinted in *Essays, Speeches & Public Letters by William Faulkner*, ed. James B. Meriwether (New York: Random House, 1965) 42-43.