

Mfs

**BEYOND OEDIPUS: LUCAS  
BEAUCHAMP, NED BARNETT,  
AND FAULKNER'S  
INTRUDER IN THE DUST**

---

**Doreen Fowler**

Read for its latent meanings, *Intruder in the Dust* traces the cause of racial lynchings to a model of identity formation based in exclusionary tactics. At this symbolic level, the novel's two central developments, the mob frenzy to lynch Lucas Beauchamp and the murder of Vinson Gowrie, appear to be motivated by a desire to identify and empower the self through the abjection of another. Disguised by doubling and distanced by undeveloped characters and a convoluted plot, the novel's project is to mount an inquiry into the fundamental problem at the crux of the psychoanalytic and psycholinguistic master narrative of identity, namely, that difference, in particular, white, male difference (what Lacan calls "the phallic distinction"), appears to be insecurely secured by repression. Stripped to its essentials, the identity narrative stipulates that alienation, or displacement, prevents culture's binaries, like male and female or black and white, from collapsing into one another. This narrative accepts as axiomatic that authority and autonomy are purchased by enforced subordination and that egalitarianism is a threat to differential meanings. Faulkner's novels, however, accept no first principle as a given; rather, they relentlessly expose and question a system of signification that exalts

exclusionary tactics—like the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp—as the foundation of meaning and identity.

Faulkner's bewildering novel, *Intruder in the Dust*, is a fiction about burial and retrieval. By my count, various bodies are buried and exhumed five times, and the novel's narrative technique mirrors this subject; that is, the text withholds or buries meanings, retrieves them, and quickly reburies them. For example, ostensibly, *Intruder in the Dust* is a murder mystery, but few who have read it can recall the identity of either the murderer or his victim. In fact, the murderer is Crawford Gowrie, and he kills his brother, Vinson, a murder that should horrify us but does not, because the text works to withhold or bury this fratricide. In effect, their story is never told, or, more accurately, it is told by proxy, displaced onto another, the narrative of a relationship between an adolescent boy, Chick Mallison, who is identified as white, and an elderly, dignified man, Lucas Beauchamp, who is both father figure to Chick and culturally defined as "black." This narrative of a father-son relationship, like its double, the murder of Vincent Gowrie, also centers on burial and retrieval. As the novel opens, Lucas is about to be lynched. His offense, the novel insistently tells us, is refusing "to be a nigger" (18), that is, refusing to play a culturally assigned role that is defined by the word "nigger." The work of the novel is to avert this lynching, and in a move that seems to defy credibility, Chick can only save Lucas by digging up a buried corpse.

These events, burial and disinterment, are, I suggest, symbolic. Specifically, they symbolize the way we compose polarized meanings in language. Binary meanings seem to depend on repressive tactics: we advance one term in a binary by subordinating, or burying, another. For example, the term, "male," takes on meaning in opposition to female, and white is distinguished by its difference from black. If male and female are alike or if white and black blend, the meanings of both terms are obscured. Burial symbolizes an effort to displace and deny, so as to construct dominant and subordinate positions in a polarized opposition. Disinterment, on the other hand, symbolizes an end to burial in a restoration to a former equal footing that burial disturbed.

I have defined the symbols of burial and retrieval in terms of language's constitution of binary meanings, but these images also refer, respectively, to repression and the return of the repressed, the basic mental processes by which the mind distinguishes cultural meanings. Repression is our refusal (or burial) of a meaning; the return of the repressed is the restoration, or disinterment, of the rejected meaning. The psychoanalytic account of identity formation exalts repression (a shutting out) as enabling the separation that constitutes

a separate self and separate meanings, even as it neatly sidesteps, or represses, Freud's finding that repression always instigates the return of the repressed, no matter the resistance.

If we read the events of *Intruder in the Dust* for a symbolic meaning, then, the text's improbable insistence that Chick must dig up a buried corpse to stop a lynching seems to suggest that this lynching and, by implication, all similar racially repressive violence, can only be averted when we retrieve the buried term; that is, when we stop socially enforcing exclusive either/or oppositions, which with one term's ascendancy guaranteed by the marginalization of another. As Jessica Benjamin explains, this model of either/or oppositions requires that "one [term] is always up and the other down, is the basic pattern of domination" (220). Of course, the alternative to cultural meanings defined by domination is a blending or convergence of binaries that seems tantamount to a leveling sameness. The word "equal" appears to imply "the same" or undifferentiated. And what is a "white identity" if it is equal to and not separate from a "black identity"? In *Intruder in the Dust*, this threat of a collapse of a white/black binary is personified in the character of Lucas Beauchamp, whom the narrative voice, unlike the characters in the novel, never identifies as a "black" man. Rather, the text insistently repeats that Lucas is "not black nor white either" (13) and thus a threat to discrete white and black identities.

In *Intruder in the Dust* Faulkner attempts to find a way to think beyond repression as the guarantee of difference and identity. Like feminist theorists who seek to revise a masculinist, Freudian/Lacanian master narrative, Faulkner's novel looks for an alternative model of signification that differentiates without dominating or discriminating. Through a series of father figures, *Intruder* explores the fundamental problem of a social order grounded in the exclusionary tactics of racism and sexism. As numerous critics have noted, the novel is the account of Chick Mallison's initiation into manhood. In making this passage, Chick must choose between two models of male gender identity formation, which are represented, respectively, by his uncle and Lucas. In the second half of the novel, Lawyer Stevens garrulously makes the case for white, male difference defined by exclusion; set against Stevens's voice is the commanding presence of Lucas Beauchamp, who presides over the first half of the book and calls Chick to another way to become a man.

### **The Lynching of Nelse Patton**

The subject of *Intruder in the Dust* is an averted lynching, or, put another way, the novel instructs us in a way to stop practices

like lynchings. By way of beginning, I want to suggest that Faulkner's fiction rewrites an appalling actual event, the lynching of Nelse Patton that took place in Oxford in 1908 when Faulkner was eleven. My notion that Faulkner's fiction represents a revisionary repetition or return to a historical lynching is supported by a number of curious correspondences between the fictional and the tragically real.<sup>1</sup>

The most notable parallel between the fictional and actual lynching is the vital roles played in both by adolescent boys. In *Intruder*, two sixteen-year-old boys, Chick and Aleck Sander, accompanied by an elderly white lady, Miss Habersham, prevent the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp, accused of the murder of a white man; in Oxford in 1908, two young white boys, the fifteen-year-old John B. Cullen, a friend of Faulkner, and John's younger brother, Jenks, captured and delivered over to a white posse Nelse Patton, a black man, accused of the murder of a white woman.<sup>2</sup> Nor did the involvement of the Cullen boys end there. Patton was jailed, and later that evening a frenzied mob gained entry to the jail by passing through the jail windows the sons of the guards, among them John and Jenks. Inside, the sons held their fathers and flung open the jail doors to the mob. Still the mob could not enter Patton's cell, and from eight o'clock that night until two in the morning, as the boys watched, the mob worked to cut through the jail wall. When they finally broke into the cell, they shot Patton twenty-six times, scalped him, castrated him, tied him to a car, and dragged his body around the streets of Oxford. Then they hanged him from a tree in the town square two blocks from Faulkner's home (Blotner 113–14; Doyle 326).

In 1935, in response to a suggestion that he write a lynching story, Faulkner abruptly retorted that because he had never witnessed a lynching, he could not write about one (Doyle 326; Williamson 159). Of course, in 1935 he had already published two works, "Dry September" (1931) and *Light in August* (1932) that powerfully evoke lynchings, and as numerous commentators have observed, Faulkner, whose bed was not more than a thousand yards from the scene of the lynching on that fateful September night, had to have heard the fevered mob and the shots fired at Patton. Surely he also saw the mutilated body. The *Lafayette County Press's* account of the lynching states that on the following day the body of Nelse Patton was publicly displayed in the Square for every passerby to view (Cullen 96). If Faulkner did not himself actually witness the lynching of Nelse Patton (and he may well have), he unquestionably knew about it,<sup>3</sup> and I propose that his novel of an averted lynching, *Intruder in the Dust*, represents Faulkner's fictional transformation of a lynching that was not prevented. Read this way, Faulkner's method, a repetition with a difference, mirrors the working of the unconscious, a permeable and

always incomplete "no" that invokes a return in the newly configured form of the double (Freud 14: 54).<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I propose to decode a series of uncanny doubles, which are the disguised returned trace of the novel's buried meanings.

### Revising Oedipus

Because *Intruder in the Dust* withholds its meanings, it fails spectacularly as a detective fiction, a genre that, at least at the conclusion, offers full disclosure. For example, in *Intruder*, the murderer of Vinson Gowrie is finally identified as his older brother, Crawford, but the stated rationale for the murder does not explain it. We are asked to believe that Crawford murdered his brother to insure the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp, who threatened to expose him as a thief. As Gavin Stevens points out, this solution to the mystery poses another one: "But why Vinson? Why did Crawford have to kill Vinson in order to obliterate the witness to his thieving? . . . Why . . . this bizarre detour?" (219). Stevens's question haunts the novel, but at a conscious level, is never addressed. Not only does the reason for the fratricide seem to be withheld, but the murderer, Crawford Gowrie, and his murdered brother, Vinson, also seem to be banished from the text. Unrealized as characters, they are merely names in the novel, whose histories are summarily sketched in at the novel's end. They are as shadowy as figures in a dream, and their shadowiness is our clue to their secret meaning: they are shadows in Chick's dream, the disguised, returned configuration of unwanted feelings of a boy who is being inducted into manhood.

As the trace of a forbidden impulse, which Chick refers to elliptically as "something shocking and shameful out of the whole white foundation" (135), Crawford Gowrie is barred from the novel, and displaced, the forbidden meaning he embodies returns in the form of disguised substitutes. Unidentified and practically invisible, Crawford appears once as a "shadow" at the novel's pivotal graveyard scene (98); specifically, he appears when, late at night, in an attempt to produce evidence to prove Lucas's innocence, Chick, with the help of Aleck Sander and Miss Habersham, exhumes the body of the murdered man, Vinson Gowrie. This unthinkable violation of a grave is the novel's axis, to which I will return, but for now, I want to focus on the trace of Crawford Gowrie's ghostly presence. As Chick and his companions approach the graveyard in the "inky" night, Aleck Sander hears a mule coming toward them on the road (127). They hide, and as the mule passes, Chick sees only "a darker shadow than shadow against the pale dirt of the road." This "shadow" carries "something" indistinguishable on the saddle in front of him, but the

rider's identity and the nature of his burden are not divulged at this time (98). Crawford never appears again in the text, but the mule that he was riding on that night does. On the morning after the late-night exhumation, Chick and Aleck Sander return to the gravesite, this time accompanied by Uncle Gavin Stevens and the sheriff, who takes with him two black prisoners. As they are about to dig up the grave again, old Nub Gowrie, the father of the clan, arrives and with him are two sons, twins, who ride a mule with a ropeburn, the same mule, as we now learn, that last night carried Crawford and Vinson. This repetition, the same mule with two Gowrie brothers on it, signals doubling: the Gowrie twins are substitutes for Crawford and his brother, Vinson, whose corpse Crawford carried across his saddle the night before.

Apparently the substitution of the Gowrie twins for Crawford and Vinson does not sufficiently disguise the refused meaning because the text now generates two sets of doubles for the twins. The first of these doubles is the pair of black prisoners, whom the sheriff takes with him to the gravesite. The sheriff appears at the gravesite with "the two Negroes"; Nub Gowrie arrives "with the two identical wooden-faced sons" (167). The sheriff orders the two prisoners to dig up the grave; Nub insists that the twins do the digging in their place. Most to the point, the Gowrie twins stand in the same relation to their father that the black prisoners bear to the sheriff. Both pairs are called "boys"; both are submissive son figures; and both are notably silent while the sheriff and Nub Gowrie speak.

Even this substitution, however, still seems to leave the rejected meaning unacceptably close to home because the two hounds that follow Nub Gowrie to the gravesite function as another set of doubles for both the prisoners and the twins. Like the twins and the prisoners, the dogs are a pair and are utterly submissive to their master, and Nub indiscriminately refers to both dogs and sons as "boys."

These doubles are the scrambled, returned trace of a rejected meaning, the answer to the question that haunts the novel: why did Crawford choose to kill his brother so as to rid himself of Lucas? The rejected meaning takes form when old man Gowrie menaces the convicts. He draws his gun on them as they, terrified, whirl and run for their lives. The denied impulse surfaces again when the old man violently assaults the cringing hounds:

the old man shouting and cursing and the yelping of the hounds and the thudding sound a man's shoe makes against a dog's ribs . . . and old Gowrie still kicking at them and cursing. . . .

"Hold up, Mr Gowrie," the sheriff said. . . . But the old man didn't seem to hear him. He didn't even seem

aware that anyone else was there; he seemed even to have forgot why he was kicking the dogs . . . still hobbling and hopping after them on one leg and the other poised and cocked to kick even after they had retreated . . . and were merely trying to dodge past him and get out of the ditch into safety, still kicking at them and cursing after the sheriff caught him by his one arm and held him. (170)

Nub Gowrie, "the fiery old tyrant of a father" (160), vents a terrible fury on the hounds and the prisoners, figures for the twins, who are, in turn, substitutes for Crawford and Vinson. In other words, a homely dread, a fear of the father's punishment, appears in the text not as a threat to his own sons, but to distanced son figures—the prisoners and the hounds. In a novel full of father figures—Lucas, Uncle Gavin, the sheriff, and Chick's shadowy father—Nub Gowrie, who keeps his grown sons "boys," is the threatening father figure out of a boy's nightmare. When Chick opens the grave of Vinson Gowrie, it is Nub that he fears, and it is Nub that the town expects to lead the lynch mob. The specific threat that old man Gowrie poses appears as an image. Nub, who clamps a gun to his side with the stub of an arm, is a one-armed man. This missing member functions as a scarcely veiled image for the dismemberment that the son fears as the father's punishment. And this image provides the veiled answer to the question: why did Vinson kill his brother? The image suggests that the dialectics of domination drove this murder; that is, a binary logic that preserves the ascendancy of one (the dominant "father") by the subordination of another (the dominated "son"). In other words, a desire to be the powerful father out of a Freudian myth drives Vinson to kill his brother, as a displaced substitute for the father he fears.

At this point in my symbolic reading, it might seem that Faulkner's novel, with its fearful father figure and murderous son, should be read in terms of Freud's Oedipal logic, which narratizes the dialectics of domination. But Faulkner's novel evokes this Oedipal theory of identity to discredit it by revealing that our Western model of either/or oppositions, which Freudian theory codifies, drives social violence, like the murder of Vinson and the narrowly averted lynching of Lucas Beauchamp. In the Freudian/Lacanian Oedipal narrative, the father is identified with the repression, or separation, that is credited with establishing difference, identity, and meaning. And, horribly, both theorists use the extreme term, "castration," to characterize this act of separation/individuation. For Freud, the castration is literal. He theorizes that a child develops a male identity by separating from the mother, and this separation is ordered by the father who threatens the child with castration. For Lacan, the threat is symbolic and "the father" is whoever or whatever represents the law of separation or

repression that enables a separate self and separate meanings. But, in both, the father is identified with a profoundly disturbing act of evisceration that is deemed necessary, indeed welcomed as enabling domination and difference.<sup>5</sup>

In *Intruder in the Dust*, Faulkner takes issue with this interpretation of the paternal function and suggests another way to read the father. While initially Nub Gowrie appears to represent the disturbing father out of Freud's nightmarish Oedipal theory of development, in a subsequent scene, Faulkner's text exposes this figure as a reification of a child's fearful fantasy. In a novel where burial signifies the repression that creates polarities and exhumation symbolizes an integrative return of the repressed, Nub Gowrie eschews the repressive, dominating role that establishes the position of father in the Oedipal narrative when he willingly buries himself to exhume the buried body of his son.

In the last of a series of exhumations in the novel, Nub Gowrie risks losing himself in deadly, enveloping quicksand to retrieve his dead son. The quicksand, which is described as "without demarcation . . . an expanse of wet sand as smooth and innocent and markless of surface as so much milk" (172), aptly figures a fearful obliteration of culture's boundaries. In particular, we cling to separation and difference out of fear of a loss of an autonomous self, and Nub's relinquishment to powerlessness is also figured in the quicksand image. When Nub jumps into the "bland surface," he "half-disappear[s] . . . with no shock or jolt: just fixed and immobile as if his legs had been cut off at the loins by one swing of a scythe, leaving his trunk sitting upright on the bland depthless milklike sand." As in the psychoanalytic narrative, in this image too, a loss of distinguishing difference is identified with an original envelopment in the maternal womb; the quicksand is "milklike" and the freeing of Vinson's dead body from the sand is described as a grotesque birthing: "the body coming out now feet first, gallowsed up and out of the inscrutable suck, to the heave of the crude tackle then free of the sand with a faint smacking plop like the sound of lips perhaps in sleep and in the bland surface nothing: a faint wimple wrinkle already fading then gone like the end of a faint secret fading smile" (173). And when the one-armed Nub, who had formerly seemed like the personification of Freud's castrating father, leaps into the quicksand, the scene images another loss of difference, a merging of the mother and father.

In a scene that pictures the obliteration of defining boundaries—the two Negro prisoners, for example, now work hand-in-hand with the Gowrie twins to raise the corpse—the most remarkable merging of opposites occurs when Nub caresses his dead son in an archetypal gesture that unmistakably defines the integrative or maternal role:

The old man stooped and began to brush clumsily with his one hand at the sand clogged into the eyes and nostrils and mouth, the hand looking curious and stiff at this which had been shaped so supple and quick to violence: to the buttons on the shirt and the butt and hammer of the pistol . . . as kneeling now the old man jerked out the tail of his shirt and bending to bring it close, wiped the or at the dead face with it then bending tried to blow the wet sand from it as though he had forgotten the sand was still damp. (174)

Grieving over and ministering to his dead son, Nub is the very image of the Pietà, the often reproduced image of the Virgin Mary holding and mourning the dead body of Christ, her son. The image of the Pietà captures the quality of maternal identification that is anathema to the psychoanalytic narrative and to Western culture, which clings to repressive tactics as a way to discern a difference between self and other. In the image, the mother, who contains the corpse of her son in her arms, is, as it were, claiming her dead son as her own. This identification of the maternal womb with death is a ceaselessly recurring theme in Western literature and in psychoanalytic theory (the reflection, like literature, of the unconscious mind). As pictured in the Pietà, however, it is not a fearful or threatening image; rather, the image venerates an integrative love that overpasses death.

Faulkner's stunning substitution of the father for the mother in the Pietà archetype revises the psychoanalytic narrative, which defines the mother and father as dialectical opposites: the father represents the law that defines by excluding; the mother stands for an integration that threatens difference. In this master narrative, love is suspect because love fosters union. In the words of Lacanian commentator James Mellard, "the Oedipal law of alienation into language (Lacan's version of Freud's castration) . . . alas, exists on the side of Thanatos, not Eros. The drive toward subjectivity, therefore, is always toward death and the Symbolic; the contrary drive—toward loss of subjectivity—is always toward love and the Imaginary." Translated, the passage means that love threatens the boundaries of the self: "the ego loses itself in the loved one" (32). Because love is feared as a transgressive passage into the other in Freudian and Lacanian theory, the mother is outlawed, and the father is he who ordains her absence and replaces her. In Faulkner's image also, the mother is absent and the father replaces her, but the paternal substitute is both different from the mother and the same: like her, he is loving. Since, in the psychoanalytic identity narrative, the father and the mother are figures for mental functions, repression (the father) and the return of the repressed (the mother), Faulkner's substitution also suggests

that these functions are not, as binary logic would have it, opposed and separate; rather, like the mother and the father, they are counterparts, part of one process of making meaning in culture.

Nub Gowrie fades from the novel after this appearance, but in the character of Lucas Beauchamp the text explores a fatherhood that is not based in domination and an identity that is not purchased by alienating another. I turn now to Lucas Beauchamp.

### Straddling Culture's Oppositions

Lucas Beauchamp is a father whose authority is not defined by an Oedipal threat.<sup>6</sup> While he is evoked in the text as unmistakably a father figure—Chick insistently compares him to his own grandfather and obeys him because "like his grandfather the man striding ahead of him was simply incapable of conceiving himself by a child contradicted and defied" (8)—he is a father who refuses the dialectics of domination. On the one hand, *Intruder in the Dust* tirelessly repeats that Lucas refuses "to be a nigger" (18); at the same time, he refuses the dominant role in the master/slave binary. For example, when a white man attacks Lucas because he does not "act like a nigger" (48), he responds with "calm speculative detachment" (19). Similarly, in a memorable early scene, he thwarts Chick's attempt to establish white supremacy in terms of black subordination. When Chick throws money on the floor and commands Lucas: "Pick it up!" (15), in response, Lucas does "nothing." "And still nothing, the man didn't move, hands clasped behind him, looking at nothing" (16).

Simply put, Lucas rejects a system of signification based in exclusion. To apprehend Lucas's subversive strategy, a comparison/contrast with Joe Christmas, the ultimately castrated protagonist of *Light in August* (1932), is instructive. Joe's unique dilemma—he does not know if he is black or white—serves to underscore the problematics of a selfhood defined by exclusion. Joe ricochets back and forth between aggressor and victim, master and slave, white and black, but he can never get outside this dialectic: when he rejects one position as untenable, he knows no way to identify a self other than by assuming the opposite role. In marked contrast to Joe Christmas, Lucas rejects both terms of the dialectic. A curious, insistently repeated description of Lucas seems to register his resistance to culture's binary ordering: "what looked out of [his face] had no pigment at all, not even the white man's lack of it, not arrogant, not even scornful: just intractable and composed" (7). This description of Lucas as "not black nor white either, not arrogant and not even scornful" (13) but simply "intractable and composed" (43) is twice repeated, and the reiterated phrases underscore that Lucas is not one thing or another.

Joe Christmas vacillates between black and white, between defiance and submission, with one term taking its meaning from the repression of the other. Lucas, on the other hand, declines both positions in culture's oppositional play of meaning.

Of course, the question then arises: outside of culture's system of meanings defined by repression, how does Lucas signify? According to language theorists, refusing language's differential meanings is not merely difficult, it is impossible. Lacan writes: "Man speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man" (65). What Lacan means is that our signifiers signify. We make meaning and we make ourselves in culture by enforcing artificial, arbitrary boundaries between the self and what we name the not-self, which is what we alienate. Lucas does not enforce these boundaries; the threat that he courts is that, without repression, without rejecting a part, he will cease to signify. Yet the text insistently observes that Lucas is "composed."

Through Lucas, the text suggests that identification, the merging of binaries, which seems to threaten a loss of distinctions, plays a part in the location of a self and social meanings. Freud's discovery of the unconscious mind led to his theory that mental processes are a function of a dynamic interaction between consciousness and the unconscious or between repression and the return of the repressed. While both the Freudian and Lacanian theories of identity formation generally read this return or integrative movement as a dangerous and deadly subversion of binary logic, Freud's recognition that repression is inseparable from return—"repression itself produces substitute formations . . . indications of a return of the repressed" (14:154)—argues that, as integrated functions, both processes work together to produce ego formation. In fact, Lacan's mirror stage, an intermediate phase in his theory of subjectivity formation, provides a model of identity that depends on an oscillation between integration and resistance. As an alternative to meanings constructed solely by exclusion, Lacan's mirror stage, which has been the focus of much study by feminist theorists, may help us to understand Lucas's model of paternal authority.

In Lacan's mirror phase, identity is composed of the interplay of separation and attachment. In his narrative of identity construction, Lacan describes the mirror stage as a developmental phase that mediates between two registers of being: the imaginary and the symbolic. Lacan's imaginary or pre-Oedipal phase is an early point in the infant's development when no distinctions exist, and the child perceives itself as one and continuous with the mother's body and the world; Lacan's symbolic phase is the condition of the post-Oedipal subject whose separate identity depends on an always unstable repression (ordained by the father) of a desire for maternal identification. The

mirror phase is notable because, as an in-between stage, it allows for both individuation and relationship. In the mirror phase, the child has a sense of self, but this self is both separate from the mother and related to her. More specifically, in this phase of identity construction, the mother functions like a mirror or identificatory imago that reflects back at the child a unified, intact body image. A blurring of mother and self, outside and inside, still remains, since the child continues to identify with the mother, but this identification does not impede a sense of self; rather it enables identity. Like a mirror in which we find our image, Terry Eagleton explains, the mother or identificatory image "is at once somehow part of ourselves—we identify with it—and yet not ourselves, something alien" (164–65). This process by which we locate a self in the mirror phase sounds strikingly like doubling, since the double seems eerily the same and different, and doubling, in turn, reflects the way the mind functions—by repression and the return of the repressed in a new form. This mirror phase, then, which Lacan sidelines as a mere way station in the development of a fully formed self, may, in fact, more accurately reflect the way we make social meanings and ourselves in culture. All well and good, but the father, the representative of difference, is curiously absent from Lacan's account of this intermediate phase. What part does the father play in this alternative identity narrative? In *Intruder in the Dust*, Faulkner introduces a scene of the constitution of the self that dramatizes the father's authorizing role in a model of identity that, like the mirror phase, blurs but does not obliterate the distinction between self and other.

As the novel opens, Lucas appears in a symbolic birthing scene that radically reinterprets the traditional Western notion of the father's role in the rise of difference and an autonomous self. The scene takes the form of a memory: Chick recalls meeting Lucas for the first time four years earlier when he was twelve. While hunting, Chick falls off a foot-log into the icy cold water of a creek; at a figurative level, his immersion and emergence from the water reenact an emergence from the fluid formlessness of pre-existence, or the rise of consciousness from the unconscious. As he climbs out of the creek, he and the reader see Lucas for the first time, and Lucas, who looms over the boy and carries an ax over his shoulder, appears to represent the threatening father out of Freud's script. At this point in the text, this origin account seems to reinscribe the psychoanalytic reading of the father as the representative of the law of repression that guarantees difference by threatening castration. But, like Nub Gowrie later in the text, Lucas also dispels the myth of the father as a fearful figure who introduces the child to dialectical meanings enforced by domination. Lucas's first words in the novel articulate

a rejection of what Lacan calls "the phallic distinction," that is, a difference defined by exclusion, which the psychoanalytic narrative identifies with male difference. He says to Aleck Sander, who has extended to Chick a long pole: "Get the pole out of his way so he can get out" (6). Lucas's words signify an abdication of the phallic paternal role as written in the masculinist identity-script; nevertheless, Lucas does preside as separation takes place, as symbolized by Chick's emergence from the water. Chick emerges on his own, buoyed by the water, a symbol for an original unity. This scene seems to emblemize feminist theorist Jane Gallop's variant reading of the relationship of the imaginary and the symbolic order. Gallop argues that the relationship is not an oppositional one, that "[t]he paths to the symbolic are thus in the imaginary," and that "the symbolic can be reached only by not trying to avoid the imaginary, but knowingly being in the imaginary" (60). At a symbolic level, the scene functions to illustrate the answer to Joe Christmas's dilemma—a way to be that does not rely on repression to foster difference.

Lucas's revision of an exclusionary Oedipal model of identity is the figurative meaning of not only the immersion scene but also the events that immediately follow. He summons Chick to follow him home to Molly, an ancient mother figure, "a tiny old almost doll-sized woman" (10). In this context, "home" signifies as both a return to the origin and a return of the repressed. Whereas in the psychoanalytic narrative the father stands for difference, in particular, difference from the mother, in this scene, Lucas is the key figure as Chick experiences a breakdown of alterity. Within Lucas's house, in a scene marked by images of enclosure and incorporation, Chick strips naked and is "enveloped in [a] quilt like a cocoon" (11); then, his thoughts flow back to his early years, which are described in terms evocative of a pre-Oedipal unity. He recalls times "spent . . . in Paralee's, Aleck Sander's mother's cabin . . . where . . . Paralee would cook whole meals for them halfway between two meals at the house and he and Aleck Sander would eat them together, the food tasting the same to each" (12).

The scene within Lucas's house suggests a meaning that appears to be at odds with binary logic—that difference, based in separation, can survive integration. In the psychoanalytic narrative of our induction into a social order, the father represents difference (he is different from the first figure with whom we identify, the mother) and introduces separation (the mother is forbidden). In this scene, the same paradigm applies in a reinterpreted form. Lucas is unmistakably a father figure—his gold toothpick and beaver hat make him the image of Chick's grandfather, the personification of paternal authority—and he replaces the mother: throughout the scene, "there stood

over him still . . . the man" (12); however, this induction into culture is not so much the complete break that binary logic demands, as it is a transformation or substitution (and recall that Freud acknowledges that repression always invokes return). The images of incorporation, the enclosing house, and Molly's presence in the background all argue that an original undemarcated existence is not completely banished. But that original formlessness (the symbolic equivalent of death or the unconscious) is not threatening precisely because the father, Lucas, is there and forms a boundary. While in the Western script too the father is a boundary, this revisionary interpretation recognizes that a boundary, a marker of difference, is also the site where oppositions intermingle.

Taken together, these memory scenes of Chick's introduction to Lucas offer an alternative to the definition of fatherhood proposed by a Western mindset intent on establishing exclusive, polarized meanings. In Lacan's identity narrative, for example, curiously, the father, who replaces the banished mother, "can only be the effect of a pure signifier" or "the dead father" in that he represents only an absence (199). This definition arises out of the seeming need for a vacuum to allow for absolute separation and binary meanings, and this, according to Lacan, is the father's role. This scene in *Intruder* suggests an alternative reading of the same paradigm—namely, that the father is the mother's uncanny double. Like the double, which appears as a substitute for what has been repressed, the father is a substitute for an alienated original maternal identification. And, like the double, which is both the same and different, the father is not the mother and yet like the mother. In this scene, while Lucas clearly is father, he is a father who shares a common identity with Molly, an ancient maternal figure. His relationship with her is symbolized in the text by the hearth fire, which he lit on the night of their wedding and which has burned continuously all the years since, an outward sign of their commitment to one another, and throughout the scene in the house, Lucas stands "straddled before the fire" (14). The word "straddle" here points to the father's role in the development of a separate identity and separate meanings: like a boundary, the father "straddles" identification and difference. Difference does not have to be a function of absence, as Lacan's schema, which uses a linguistic model, argues. Alteration and substitution also make a difference, the difference necessary for meaning in culture, and the father is the first substitute, the figure who introduces us into the realm of culture and language, an order of endless cultural transformations of a death-bearing/regenerative material existence.

Because Lucas straddles culture's binary ordering, he is difficult to read. His way of making meaning is fearful to us, because we

cling to exclusion as a way to identify differential meanings and an autonomous self. But, at this point in the narrative, the text insists that separation and convergence are not mutually exclusive categories. Rather, they are related just as repression and the return of the repressed are related. A compelling illustration of Lucas's variant interpretation of signification appears in the form of a rambling, clause-laden, nearly unpunctuated description of Lucas's house:

and now they were in no well-used tended lane leading to tenant or servant quarters and marked by walking feet but a savage gash half gully and half road mounting a hill with an air solitary independent and intractable too and then he saw the house, the cabin . . . the paintless wooden house, the paintless picket fence whose paintless latchless gate the man kneed open still without stopping . . . the four of them walking in what was less than walk because its surface was dirt too yet more than path, the footpacked strip running plumblin straight between two borders of tin cans and empty bottles and shards of china and earthenware set into the ground, up to the paintless steps and the paintless gallery along whose edge sat more cans but larger—empty gallon buckets which had once contained molasses or perhaps paint and wornout water or milk pails and one five-gallon can for kerosene with its top cut off and half of what had once been somebody's (Edmonds' without doubt) kitchen hot water tank sliced longways like a banana—out of which flowers had grown last summer and from which the deadstalks and the dried and brittle tendrils still leaned and drooped, and beyond this the house itself, gray and weathered and not so much paintless as independent of and intractable to paint so that the house was not only the one possible continuation of the stern untended road but was its crown too as the carven ailanthus leaves are the Greek column's capital. (8–9)

Houses, Freud tells us, are a symbol for the self; Lucas's house functions as an identificatory imago. Reading the image, one immediately remarks a correspondence: the same words used repeatedly to describe Lucas, "independent and intractable," also describe his house. We note as well that the house is repeatedly and emphatically characterized as "paintless." The metaphor is easily worked out. Like his house, which is "independent of and intractable to paint," he is proof against culture's exclusive either-or oppositions, like man or "nigger." How, then, how does he delimit a self? Like a disguised meaning out of the unconscious mind, the image of his house points the way to differential meanings that survive overlap and interplay.

The passage appears to be an attempt to wrench language, the medium of the symbolic order, so as to simulate mirror-stage fusion. The description is characterized by teeming, even overwhelming presence. Nothing is left out, and no single item dominates. Because of a lack of containment, there is disorder, overflow, blurred distinctions. For example, the description of Lucas's house is both what it is and something else; that is, it is at one and the same time a description of the house and a description of the path, the hill, the fence, the gate, the walkway, the tin cans, the empty bottles, the shards of china, and much more. In this same way, the road, the gate, and the walkway also do not seem to be coincident with themselves. The road to the house is "half gully and half road"; the gate is both gate and "latchless"; the walkway is "less than walk . . . yet more than path." Each item is an item in a series, a part of an overarching whole. The key point, however, is that while unbroken continuity blurs distinctions, it does not efface them. Intermixed meanings are still meanings: the road, gate, walk, and house do not cease to signify. The image signifies that, contrary to our fears, the "I" can be "I" and still acknowledge relationships, like the child in the mirror stage who locates a self by means of a mirroring other, like Lucas's house, which is both "the one possible continuation of the stern untended road" and "its crown," like Lucas himself, who "straddles" culture's exclusive either-or oppositions, and is nonetheless "composed" (13).

### **The Uncanny Double**

Lucas's rejection of a Western notion that repression alone preserves identity is the veiled meaning of the "job" of exhumation, which he "offers" to Chick. Critics have frequently faulted Lucas for refusing to take action (Weinstein 125; Morrises 235); these critics have failed to observe the enormity of the central act of the novel, the exhumation of the dead, which is ordained by Lucas. The retrieval of the buried body signifies the undoing of repression. Whereas, according to the psychoanalytic narrative, the father is father by dint of ordering exclusion (or burying); Lucas is a father who directs Chick to exhume or restore what has been displaced. As the text has revealed, repression, which creates dominant and subordinated positions, or a master/slave dialectic, engenders Oedipal violence, like the murder of Vinson and the mob frenzy to lynch Lucas.<sup>7</sup> The "job" Lucas calls Chick to, a relaxing of repression, symbolizes the way out of this deadly cycle. If Chick can face his own worst fears and his own worst self, he can save Lucas.

Prior to this point in the narrative, the text has critiqued the psychoanalytic narrative of repression, but arguably, when it becomes

Chick's "job" to imitate Lucas and undo the work of repression in an act that symbolizes psychic identification, this identification seems to be fictively rendered in accordance with the Freudian interpretation. In essence, the "job" Lucas offers Chick figures a conscious recognition of what he represses. Repression is a mental function, a withholding that allows us to separate and individuate, and Lucas's command to cease repressing refers to another mental function, the return of the repressed. This return is deeply fearful to us as it seems to entail a breakdown of difference, the difference between self and other, and the difference between consciousness and the unconscious. According to Freud and Lacan, such an integration threatens psychic stability and a sense of a detached self. In essence, it prefigures death. Previously in the text, we have seen Lucas and Nub Gowrie face this threat with equanimity: for example, on the night when the whole town is awake and awaits the imminent lynching of Lucas, he sleeps peacefully in his jail cell; similarly, without a thought for himself, Nub Gowrie leaps into deadly quicksand to save his dead son. However, when Chick is called to disinter the buried term in the dialectic and, in effect, faces what Julia Kristeva calls "the erotic, death-bearing unconscious . . . a projection . . . of the death drive" (192), the text envisions this opening of the self to the alienated other in accordance with the Freudian/Lacanian script, which equates identification with annihilation and which makes of the mother—as the site of convergence—a figure out of a child's nightmare.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the graveyard scene of psychic identification, a troubling alignment of the mother with sexuality and death persists. The retrieval of the buried corpse, the external equivalent of a psychic integration, begins promisingly with the appearance of Miss Habersham. In a novel where maternal figures are shadowy, repressed figures, in this scene of disinterment, Miss Habersham, who in her old-fashioned hat reminds Chick of his dead grandmother, is foregrounded. Thereafter, however, this recognition of the mother's presence seems to be evoked as a dissolution of subjectivity in a gruesome maternal embrace. The portrait of Miss Habersham in *Intruder* corresponds to her previous incarnation as Miss Worsham in *Go Down, Moses*. In that novel's closing section, "Go Down, Moses," Miss Worsham crosses culturally defined racial boundaries to join with Mollie Beauchamp and her family members as they mourn the death of Mollie's grandson in a grieving, unbroken circle around the hearth fire, "the ancient symbol of human coherence and solidarity" (361). In striking contrast to Gavin Stevens, who ignominiously runs from this death observance, Miss Worsham signals her acceptance of an intermixed identity that threatens the separate self when she says to Stevens, "It's our grief" (363). In *Intruder* once again Stevens and

Miss Habersham are contrasted, and again this paradigm applies. By presiding over the opening of the grave, symbolically Miss Habersham acknowledges a dissolution of the ego that Stevens, who asks, "how risk it?" (79), refuses.

This same maternal willingness to recognize attachment even if it means death is pictured in the Pietà, but whereas that image honors a love that is not daunted by death, in this graveyard scene, the breakdown of alterity seems to inspire only fear. While the text recognizes that Miss Habersham is braver than Stevens, that she seeks to protect the boys from death, that, in fact, she attempts to substitute herself for them as she asks them to walk behind her, nevertheless, in this scene, the effect of her willingness to take death on herself is a troubling identification of the mother with death, the same identification that is inscribed in the Freudian/Lacanian master narrative.<sup>9</sup> For example, as Chick and his black foster brother dig, they are described as "children," who stand waist-deep in a pit, which is imaged as a maw that threatens to devour them: they stand "invisible to one another above the pit's inky yawn" (127). The message that the mother is the bearer of death is suggested again when Chick trains his flashlight on a tombstone and reads the engraved name of the mother of the corpse as if the dead man were buried in her. It is implied yet again when Chick "look[s] up out of a halfway rifled grave" and "see[s] as always Miss Habersham in motionless silhouette on the sky above him" (101). A "motionless silhouette" and the object of Chick's gaze, Miss Habersham is represented as Chick's double, his mirror image. This doubling is comparable to another: the doubling of the mother and the father that occurs when Nub Gowrie takes on the mother's role as he embraces his dead child. But the similarity only calls attention to a striking contrast: whereas Nub fearlessly risks himself when he leaps into quicksand to retrieve his dead son, Chick seems overcome with horror and fear as he digs up the body of another buried son.

The text also seems to reinscribe the masculinist Lacanian narrative when the opening of the casket is evoked as a sexual climax. Aleck Sander "thrust[s]" the board into the dirt with increasing rapidity, in a repeated a motion that is accompanied by his accelerating breathing: "and [Chick] could hear the *chuck!* and then the faint swish as Aleck Sander thrust the board into the dirt and then flung the load up and outward, expelling his breath, saying 'Hah!' each time—a sound furious raging and restrained, going faster and faster until the ejaculation was almost as rapid as the beat of someone running: 'Hah! . . . Hah! . . . Hah!'" (101). This sexual imagery, the hallmark of Lacan's notion of *jouissance*, seems to record rather than to revise the traditional male narrative of subjectivity. *Jouissance*, in French,

literally means sexual orgasm, and Lacan employs the sexual term to describe the satisfaction of what Freud calls the death instinct. Lacan's appropriation of the sexual term seems to equate sexual intercourse with death for a man. For Lacan, *jouissance*, the act of identification with the alienated other/mother, is always "de trop" (323), too much; that is, it is the death gasp of the dissolving subject.

Finally, a disturbing symbology attends the opening of the coffin. To enter the coffin, Chick lowers himself into the hole, stretches himself out above the coffin, "balanc[es]" himself above it, and "straddle[s]" it (102). Posed in this way, when Chick raises the lid, the corpse becomes his mirror image. Facing the corpse, he figuratively merges with his alter ego in an act that signifies a conflation of life and death and an assimilation of Chick's rejected instincts and desires. The "straddling" that Chick is called to here is the father's role as modeled by Lucas when he stood "straddled" (14) before the hearth fire, the symbol of his relationship to Mollie. But, when Chick attempts to imitate this fatherly role, to assume the middle ground where binary meanings like life and death, husband and wife, or consciousness and the unconscious come together, this identification is evoked as an all-unwelcome Freudian uncanny moment when a harbinger of unspeakable terror, a disguised formation of the deathly unconscious, eludes conscious censors, is recognized as the dark, rejected self, and is banished even in the moment of recognition.

In this uncanny moment, the novel's central meaning, which is buried under layer after layer of repression, is recovered—altered and transformed like a dream image. When Chick figuratively merges with the corpse of the stranger, Jake Montgomery, they are doubled, and this doubling signifies that the stranger is not strange but the disguised, returned formation of feelings that Chick disowns. To recover these denied feelings, the novel's most deeply recessed meaning, we must resolve a series of displacements. Jake, who is Chick's double, is a displaced substitute for Vinson, since Jake's corpse has replaced Vinson's. Vinson, in turn, is Crawford's double, the figure of what he represses, since Crawford kills Vinson as a way to act out his Oedipal fears and desires. If we work our way through this series of displacements, we see that, by way of Jake and Vinson, Crawford is Chick's double twice removed. Crawford, who figures in the novel only as a "shadow" seen by Chick, is Chick's shadow. Crawford, the malevolent son who kills his brother, is the double of Chick *Mallison*, and this doubling suggests that Crawford's story, itself all scrambled in the manner of the unconscious, is the disguised return of Chick's own repressed fear of domination and desire to dominate that he must either consciously own in an act of identification or persist in repression, a psychic violence that produces cultural formations, like the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp—or Nelse Patton.

Even after we have recognized Crawford as Chick's twice-displaced projection, there still remains one last distancing to resolve. At this juncture, the reader may expect me to argue that Chick is Faulkner's double. Certainly there is evidence for such an interpretation. As Toni Morrison writes in *Playing in the Dark*, "the subject of the dream is the dreamer" (17), and as noted earlier, *Intruder in the Dust* seems to revisit a traumatic event witnessed by Faulkner during his childhood, the lynching of Nelse Patton. But to read the novel as only the vehicle for Faulkner's own displaced fears and desires would constitute yet another evasion. A psychoanalytic reading that indicts the author, it seems to me, overlooks (or represses) the nature of reading, which is an act of psychic identification. Reading closes the gap between the self and the central mediating consciousness in the novel. In *Intruder*, that character is Chick. By secretly imputing Oedipal feelings to Chick, who, as we read, becomes our alter ego, the text covertly implicates the reader in an endless recycling of dangerous impulses generated by repressive tactics. Reading *Intruder in the Dust*, we should experience our own uncanny moment as, at the end of a long series of displacements and substitutions, we recognize that the uncanny stranger we fear is within us, our own dangerous and deadly drives. Like Chick, who is summoned to turn away from repression and to recognize his own implication in a cycle of violence, we readers too are called to own our own will to power and dread of powerlessness, because the alternative is a psychic repression that drives social acts of prohibition, like lynchings. In this way, the text fictionalizes a thesis, buried in Freud and uncovered by Kristeva, that the uncanny stranger I fear is "my (own and proper) unconscious" (Kristeva 183).<sup>10</sup>

### Gavin Stevens and the Rhetoric of Race

In a novel that buries and retrieves its meanings, in its last third, the text seems to rebury what Lucas and Chick have labored to uncover as it now foregrounds Lawyer Stevens, who counters the text's subversive content with an argument for enforcing racial boundaries. Taking for his subject the critical and timely issue of integration in the South—in 1948, President Truman was urging Congress to adopt his Civil Rights program—Stevens, in a seemingly interminable stream of convoluted rhetoric, argues the "Go slow, now" delay tactics of Southern resistance to integration. At a symbolic level, his running commentary works to reassert the logic of difference, which up to this point the novel has deconstructed.

Because of correspondences between Stevens's pronouncements and Faulkner's own public statements on racial issues, from the

time of its initial publication, many reviewers and critics of *Intruder in the Dust* have read Gavin Stevens as Faulkner's spokesperson.<sup>11</sup> For his part, Faulkner denied that Stevens is an authorial surrogate,<sup>12</sup> and a number of scholars have quite rightly warned against "read[ing] backwards from the public statements into the fiction" (Polk 140), a questionable and problematic move in any case and particularly in this instance since, within the text, Stevens's line of reasoning is arguably discredited. That said, how do we account for the striking similarities between Stevens's pronouncements and Faulkner's? In my reading, this similarity is the effect of a common intent: both Faulkner's political statements and the lawyer's intrusive rhetorical posturing issue the same defense of difference through separation (or burying), which in earlier scenes, the text has challenged and critiqued. To counter that critique and to restore a defining difference, Faulkner draws on the specious and evasive rhetoric he uses in public forums to argue to postpone integration, a delay tactic that masks an argument for racial separation as the support of white identity. As the Morrises write, "It is the logic of difference that justifies (like a myth) the 'not yet ready' argument of modern racism" (235). Because both Stevens and Faulkner are mounting a similar argument, a veiled defense of enforcing polarized racial meanings, and *not* because I mean to suggest that correspondences between the character's and the author's arguments privilege Stevens's voice, I interpret together the latent content of Faulkner's and Stevens's "not yet ready" rationalizations.

If we read Faulkner's and Lawyer Stevens's convoluted and coded language for disguised meanings, we find that both are making the case for an autonomous, separate, Southern identity. For instance, the emphatically repeated message of both voices is a rejection of Northern "interference" as a threatening incursion by "outlanders" (199) on an intact, separate, South. In his interview with Russell Howe, for example, Faulkner adamantly insists that the South must "be let alone" (*Lion* 263) to deal with racial injustice in its own way and on its own terms: "don't force us," he says (259). Similarly, in *Intruder*, Gavin Stevens expostulates: "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" (199). It should be noted that, in his public statements, Faulkner expressed the opinion that "inequality was artificial" ("On Fear" 99) and that "equality is inevitable, an irresistible force" (*Lion* 260). At the same time, however, the defensiveness of Faulkner's and Stevens's emphatic insistence on nonintervention from "outsiders" suggests both a fear of this "irresistible" equality and a desire to resist it. Perhaps the starkest example of this defensive, separatist posture is Faulkner's statement,

made during the Howe interview and later publicly recanted, that, if he were forced to by interfering outsiders, he would "fight for Mississippi against the United States even if it meant going out into the street and shooting Negroes" (*Lion* 261).<sup>13</sup>

That Faulkner and Stevens are, in fact, arguing to preserve a racial difference is the veiled subtext of a frequently reiterated theme of their discourse: both invoke regional loyalty to a "homogeneous South" to justify postponing racial equality.<sup>14</sup> In the following passage, the "homogeneous South" functions as a code word for "white South":

It's because we alone in the United States (I'm not speaking of Sambo right now; I'll get to him in a minute) are a homogeneous people. . . . So we are not really resisting what the outland calls (and we too) progress and enlightenment. We are defending not actually our politics or beliefs or even our way of life, but simply our homogeneity from a federal government to which the rest of this country has had to surrender. . . . Only a few of us know that only from homogeneity comes anything of a people or for a people of durable and lasting value. . . . That's why we must resist the North: not just to preserve ourselves. (150–51)

Stevens contends that racial integration poses a threat to Southern homogeneity. "Homogeneity," of course, refers to a uniform people. In what sense are white Southerners uniform? Stevens's intrusive parentheses and his offensive term, "Sambo," provide the answer. In describing Southern homogeneity, Stevens must bracket off "Sambo" because it is "Sambo's" very exclusion that defines a homogeneous identity. Within the context of a binary opposition, certain Southerners can be identified as homogeneous, that is to say white, if others are characterized as different from them because these others are like "Sambo." "Sambo" is of course a racial stereotype, a white man's image of a black man as carefree, irresponsible, and childish. In a text where Lucas has refused to be "a nigger," "Sambo" seems to function as a euphemism for "nigger." With this racial stereotype, Stevens uses language to create a racial binary opposition, and in this last third of the novel, as Stevens builds a world of words, we see the terrible power of representations to characterize and even determine identity.

A fear of a loss of difference drives Stevens's and Faulkner's "go slow" rhetoric. In the lawyer's impassioned advocacy of Southerner's "homogeneity," a fear of merging is thinly masked by a negative construction. Freud explains that a prohibited meaning may make its way into consciousness if it is negated (19:239). An illustration

of such a negative construction is Stevens's assertion: "That's why we must resist the North: not just to preserve ourselves." Disavowed by "not," Stevens voices his fear that egalitarianism will signify the obliteration of a white difference. This same fear emerges in Faulkner's public statements on race. In the essay "On Fear," for example, in a sentence so convoluted and clause-burdened as to obscure his meaning, the fear that racial equality will mean the end to white identity appears buried in a negative construction: ". . . white people in the South . . . will—must— . . . grasp at such straws for weapons as contumely and threat and insult to change the views or anyway the voice which dares to suggest that betterment of the Negro's condition does not necessarily presage the doom of the white race" (95). Even more explicitly, the fear of white extinction surfaces in the course of the Russell Howe interview, when Faulkner blurts out: "Shall we obliterate the persecutor?" (*Lion* 261). In this context, we see why homogeneity is so prized; the homogeneous culture of the South subliminally represents a dominant white race. Whereas integration threatens white hegemony, homogeneity—a code word for the vigilant policing of boundaries that identify binary oppositions—holds out the promise of white supremacy, as Stevens claims in the course of a panegyric to homogeneity: one, uniform, and homogeneous, he says, the South will "present a front not only impregnable but not even to be threatened" (153).<sup>15</sup>

Faulkner's conflicted novel, however, does not let stand uncontested Stevens's claim for invincibility through homogeneity. The critical difference between Faulkner's public statements and Stevens's fictional monologue is that, within the text, repressed meanings return reconfigured. The meaning that Stevens refuses returns in the form of an example of his lauded homogeneity, the Gowrie clan, the living embodiment of Stevens's notion of "homogeneity":

[The Gowries are] integrated and interlocked and intermarried . . . not even into a simple clan or tribe but a race a species which before now had made their hill stronghold good against the county and federal government too, which did not even simply inhabit . . . but had translated and transmogrified that whole region of lonely pine hills . . . 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—into a synonym for independence and violence: an idea with physical boundaries like a quarantine for plague

so that solitary unique and alone out of all the county it was known to the rest of the county by the number of its survey co-ordinate—Beat Four. (35)

The Gowries epitomize a homogeneous identity produced by separation, and within the clan the Gowrie twins exist as a subset—an even more striking exemplar of the attribute. No two human beings could be more alike than the identical Gowrie twins. They are as "identical as two clothing store dummies" (159); as "identical as two clothes pins on a line, the identical faces even weathered exactly alike." When they dismount a mule, "they got down as one, at the same time even" (160). As the text's leading example of "identicalness," we might expect them to model the invincibility that Stevens hopes issues from uniformity; instead, through doubling, the twins function to undercut the homogeneity argument. The Gowrie twins, who ride double the same mule that, on the night of the murder, carried Crawford Gowrie with his murdered brother flung across the saddle, are doubles for the murderer and his victim. This equation of the two pairs of brothers formulates the unsayable meaning that Vinson was not murdered by a rejected "outlander," but by someone as like him as Gowrie twin is like Gowrie twin.

Through this doubling, the novel leaks the message that, no matter how exclusively we draw the boundaries that define "us," we are never safe; a murderous impulse always lurks inside the border, engendered by a binary logic that encourages us to exclude and subordinate in the name of self-preservation. The text of *Intruder in the Dust* withholds or buries the knowledge that Vinson was murdered and buried by his brother, because this fratricide suggests that a Western model of binary thinking, which seeks to empower one term by disempowering, or burying, another, does not make us "impregnable" as Gavin Stevens idly dreams, rather it incites a power struggle among brothers (153).

### **Ned Barnett and Lucas Beauchamp**

*Intruder in the Dust*, which begins so promisingly, ends disappointingly. In the end, the text's critique of a phallic, or white male, difference defined by alienation is buried along with the corpse of Vinson and the newly dead Crawford Gowrie, who is disposed of with a brief reference to his jail cell suicide. Former transgressions of a repressive social order are swept aside, and the status quo is restored. The sign of this restoration is a change in Chick, who in the final scene seems almost to metamorphose into his uncle. The novel has always been the story of Chick's induction into manhood and the

social order, a rite of passage that he navigates with the guidance of two father figures, Uncle Gavin Stevens, the spokesperson for an alienating difference, and Lucas Beauchamp, a father who revises an exclusionary model of identity. In the end, Chick must choose between them, and he chooses whiteness secured by rejection of another, as we expected he would, since, even when he retrieved buried meanings, he was never able to overcome his fear of a loss of difference.

The novel's end recalls its beginning. In both the opening and the concluding scenes, Lucas is the object of Chick's gaze, and this similarity focuses our attention on a striking difference. In the opening pages, Chick, who has fallen into a creek, "look[s] up" (6) from the icy water to see "a man" (7) above him. In the final pages, he "look[s] down into the Square" (229) from his uncle's office window and sees Lucas below him. Perhaps even more to the point, Chick and his uncle now have a shared perspective: "And that was when they saw Lucas crossing the Square, probably at the same time" (234). The symbology is transparent: Chick, who formerly had opposed his uncle's racial views and had accused him of "defend[ing] the lynchers" (199), now has internalized his uncle's way of seeing.

The last chapter, which brings together Lucas, Stevens, and Chick in Stevens's law office, seems designed to reassert the dialectics of domination, which formerly had been contravened and replaced in the text. Whereas in the opening scene of the novel, Chick repeatedly identifies Lucas as "a man" (7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16), in the closing one, Stevens works hard to deny manhood to Lucas. For example, before Lucas can speak, Stevens tries to take command: "You didn't come here for me to tell you what to do so I'm going to tell you anyway" (235). By "tell[ing]" Lucas "what to do," Stevens is claiming agency for himself at the other man's expense. Lucas has come to the law office as a client to pay his bill, but Stevens refuses payment, because both men know that, were the lawyer to accept money from the other man, he would be treating Lucas as an equal. Finally, to get rid of Lucas, Stevens accepts a token payment, but he treats it as a joke. He explains that he will take two dollars to pay for a pen point found broken when "[he] came to again" after repeatedly "trying . . . to get . . . sense out of . . . all the different things you finally told me" (239). The scene takes a turn for the worse when Lucas attempts to pay part of his bill with a sack of fifty pennies, and Stevens insists that Lucas counts the pennies. As Chick and the amused Stevens observe, Lucas counts each coin, "one by one moving each one with his forefinger into the first mass of dimes and nickels, counting aloud" (240). The purpose of this penny count clearly is to make the old man look like the "Sambo" of Stevens's

racial stereotyping, and we see now, if we hadn't already, that Stevens is no different from all the other "homogeneous" white men in Jefferson who are driven by a compulsion to "make a nigger" out of Lucas so as to establish their own high estate.

Despite Stevens's best efforts to do so, the novel does not conclude with the dialectics of domination reaffirmed, because Lucas is proof against the lawyer's wordplay just as he was proof against the lynch mob's tactics. While Chick, now a member of a community defined by exclusion, has changed, Lucas remains "unchanged." When Lucas enters the law office, Chick sees "the same face which he had seen for the first time when he climbed dripping up out of the icy creek that morning four years ago, unchanged, to which nothing had happened since not even age" (235). Lucas is the "same" figure of authority, whom, four years ago, the boy "could not more imagine himself contradicting . . . than he could his grandfather" (8), and the difference between the first and last scene is a function of Stevens's and now Chick's refusal to recognize Lucas's paternal status. This denial is shockingly illustrated in the final pages as Stevens glosses the events of the text so as to make a cipher of Lucas: "you violated a white grave to save a nigger" (236), he says to Chick. Set against this attempt to erase him is Lucas's claim of a receipt, a tangible token of their acknowledgement of him as a man and an equal.<sup>16</sup>

I want to conclude by suggesting that Lucas's paternal authority, a denied meaning that ceaselessly returns disguised in the text, is itself the returned trace of the paternal status of the widely recognized source for Lucas Beauchamp—Ned Barnett. According to Faulkner family lore, Ned Barnett was "a retainer for generations" (Blotner 538); recently, however, Joel Williamson, who has studied census records and other legal documents, disputes the family claim. We know with certainty that Ned Barnett was born in 1865; in 1910, he lived in the village of Ripley just a few doors away from the old Colonel's "shadow family"; and from the 1930s until his death in 1947, he worked for William Faulkner, first as a tenant farmer, then as a household servant (Williamson 260–61). Like Lucas, Ned Barnett was a man of notable, unbending dignity, who seemed ageless. But the trait that unmistakably identifies Ned Barnett as the inspiration for Lucas Beauchamp is his practice of wearing the old-fashioned clothes that he inherited from Faulkner's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather (Blotner 52–53). In *Intruder*, the outdated clothes that Lucas wears prompt Chick to identify him with his grandfather. In his semiautobiographical essay, "Mississippi" (1954), Faulkner provides an extended reminiscence of "Uncle" Ned, and makes this same identification:

Ned, born in a cabin in the back yard in 1865, in the time of the middleaged's great-grandfather and had outlived three generations of them, who had not only walked and talked so constantly for so many years with the three generations that he walked and talked like them, he had two tremendous trunks filled with the clothes which they had worn . . . so that, glancing idly up and out the library window, the middleaged would see that back, that stride, that coat and hat going down the drive toward the road, and his heart would stop and even turn over. (*Essays* 39)

Faulkner recalls here an uncanny experience, a moment when repression breaks down and a denied meaning is recognized. In this reminiscence, the denied meaning that returns is the recognition of Ned Barnett's paternal authority. In the absence of repression, Faulkner sees in Ned the very image of his dead grandfather. This same meaning, I argue, is the disguised center of *Intruder in Dust*. More specifically, at the center of *Intruder* is the continually banished and returning knowledge that, paradoxically, by "straddling" oppositions, by owning his own deathly-reintegrative existence, Lucas Beauchamp—the novel's avatar for Ned Barnett—achieves a fatherly status that forever eludes Thomas Sutpen, who sought fatherhood in a master/slave dialectic.

Does *Intruder in the Dust* successfully challenge a dominant Western system of meanings defined by exclusion? The reader, I think, must judge. On the one hand, the novel exposes the deadly cycle of violence generated by repressive tactics, and in the person of Lucas Beauchamp, suggests that paternal authority is not the effect of alienation. At the same time, however, the text also opposes Lucas's revisionary inscription of fatherhood. First, as we have seen, Gavin Stevens speaks for all the white men in the novel who are committed to a white, male distinction defined by rejection, particularly racial exclusion. In addition, even when Chick emulates Lucas and risks an identification with his own denied impulses, this merging is imagined as a ghoulish envelopment in the nightmare figure of Freud's pre-Oedipal mother. Perhaps more to the point, the text's critique of a repressive phallic authority is itself mired in repression, since its subversive content is buried under layer after layer of displacement and substitution. One might argue that Faulkner uses an exclusionary system of differential meanings to demonstrate its instability, but it is also possible that he, unlike Lucas, can find no way to signify outside of culture's oppositional play of meaning. Indeed, the novel's most troubling exclusion may be Faulkner's refusal to acknowledge Ned Barnett's contribution to his work. "Uncle" Ned's widely noted

dignity marks him as unquestionably the model for Lucas Beauchamp, and his death in late December of 1947 appears to have prompted Faulkner, in January of 1948, to set aside the novel he was working on to compose *Intruder in the Dust* (Blotner 1243–44, 1246). Similar circumstances, the death of lifetime Faulkner family servant, Caroline Barr, in 1940, had moved Faulkner to dedicate to her his novel, *Go Down, Moses* (1942), which in many ways appears to be the counterpart of *Intruder*. Yet, despite this precedent and despite the long shadow that Ned Barnett casts over his fiction, Faulkner did not dedicate it to him.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the novel conspicuously lacks a dedication. If such an omission seems ungrateful, however, we readers seem equally ungenerous if we fault Faulkner, who in novel after novel rethinks the problem of differential meanings defined by exclusion. Even if *Intruder in the Dust* does not publicly recognize Ned Barnett, still it pays tribute to a man who demonstrates that fatherhood is not the effect of domination and that identification is not the death of meaning. In the end, perhaps the best we can say is that, if *Intruder in the Dust* fails to challenge a system of meanings based in alienation, Lucas Beauchamp/Ned Barnett does not.

## Notes

I would like to thank my colleague, Marta Caminero-Santangelo, whose astute comments on an earlier draft of this essay were immensely helpful.

1. My suggestion that Faulkner's fiction represents a return to a childhood memory is also supported by correspondences between his 1948 novel and his reminiscence, "Mississippi" (1954). For example, in both, the narrator refers to himself with the third person pronoun, "he." In the essay, we find the real-life source for *Intruder's* notorious Beat Four in Sullivan's Hollow (33); Aleck Sander seems like a fictional incarnation of a black boy Faulkner evokes in the autobiographical piece (17); and Lucas Beauchamp seems to be modeled after "Uncle" Ned Barnett, an elderly black man and longtime servant of the Faulkner family, who is virtually elegized in the piece.
2. Williamson suggests that prominent white people in the town may have had reason to want to see Patton, who was a bootlegger, eliminated. See 159–61.
3. Cullen observes that the lynching of Nelse Patton is "more widely known than anything else of this kind that ever happened in Lafayette County" and that Faulkner "must have heard numerous stories about the Patton case" (92). Blotner points out that Hal Cullen, brother of John, was Faulkner's good friend and fifth-grade classmate, and that talk in the schoolyard was all about the lynching (114).

4. In his landmark study of doubling in Faulkner, John T. Irwin notes that the double is the formulation of repressed material: "Rejected instincts and desires are cast out of the self, repressed internally only to return externally personified in the double" (33).
5. In "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," Freud theorizes that because of "a threat . . . that this part of him which he values so highly will be taken from him," the child represses Oedipal desire and performs a symbolic self-castration: he "preserve[s] the genital organ" by "paralyz[ing] it—remov[ing] its function," and "if [the repression] is ideally carried out," it accomplishes "the abolition of the Oedipal complex." Freud admits, however, that all may not be well with an ego born of such a process and sounds this cautionary note: "If the ego has in fact not achieved much more than a repression of the complex, the latter [the Oedipal complex] persists in an unconscious state in the id and will later manifest its pathogenic effect" (19: 177). In other words, the hoped for "dissolution" may merely be the repression of a desire that, if only repressed, will endlessly resurface in reconfigured forms, like the double. Lacanian commentator James Mellard explains that "castration is the symbolic function within the Oedipus complex that establishes the 'position' of the father in the psychic structure" (29).
6. Moreland argues insightfully that, with Lucas Beauchamp, Faulkner is trying to identify a model of manhood that does not exclude women and blacks, but that the author writes about this manhood "without ever quite understanding . . . how Lucas manages somehow to maintain this kind of dignity even when he is seen as black by everyone around him and therefore unentitled to this kind of self-possession" (65). Gwin contends that "Lucas speaks out of a sense of himself . . . that . . . is as bisexual as it is biracial" and that, from Lucas, Chick learns to develop "a masculine identity which comes to accept its own feminine elements" (93). For Towner, Lucas represents Faulkner's attempt "to imagine the scope of effort it would take for a 'black' man in the late 1940s to create an audience of 'white' believers who will act upon his 'word'" (53). Several critics maintain that Lucas fails to represent a viable alternative to a fatherhood constituted by an Oedipal threat. Weinstein states that both father figures in the novel, Lucas and Gavin Stevens, are "impotent," and that the "Oedipal legacy" is "[b]ypassed, not dismantled, not even attacked" (125). The Morriszes read *Intruder* as a failed quest for "a difference that did not mythologize itself in exclusive/inclusive oppositions." They find that "Lucas is virtually silenced in the novel" and that "the novel does not really seem to eliminate the word difference from the vocabulary of racism, classism, and sexism" (235). Schmitz observes that Faulkner is able to show "the majesty of . . . Lucas's patriarchal authority" but that ultimately the presentation of him fails because "Lucas's defiance of white racism, always prompt, is itself racist" (259).
7. Kristeva observes that a master/slave dialectic "provokes regressive and protectionist rage . . . must we not stick together, remain among

- ourselves, expel the intruder, or at least, keep him in 'his' place?" (20).
8. Similarly imagined scenes of psychic identification appear in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Unvanquished*. See Irwin 58–59; and my *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*, 121–27. My interpretation owes a debt to Irwin's seminal, psychoanalytic study of repression and doubling. My approach differs from his, however, in that whereas Irwin applies Freudian and/or Lacanian formulas to Faulkner's fiction, my essay attempts to show that these imaginative texts revise the master-narrative of identity.
  9. Kristeva discusses this Freudian identification of woman and death. See 183–85. See also Lydenberg 1076–79.
  10. "Fright," Kristeva writes, "anchor[s]" and "locate[s] uncanny strangeness 'outside'" (183). She explains that "the builder of the *other* and, in the final analysis, the strange is indeed repression and its perviousness" (184).
  11. In a review in the *New Yorker*, Edmund Wilson wrote: "the author's ideas on this subject are apparently conveyed, in their explicit form, by the intellectual uncle, who . . . gives vent to long disquisitions . . . so 'editorial' in character that . . . the series may be pieced together as something in the nature of a public message delivered by the author himself" (476). Taylor states that *Intruder's* plot works to "justify Gavin's polemics" (163); according to Sundquist, *Intruder* is a "ludicrous novel and a depressing social document" (149); and Snead finds "narrative complicity" in Stevens's "restrictive and stereotyping tone" and concludes that "in the end the fear of chaos conquered Faulkner" (221–22). Other commentators have argued that a dialogic tension exists in the novel. The Morrises note that Chick's objection to Stevens's argument "provides an important moment of dialogic disruption in Stevens's overpowering monologue" and that "the plot of the novel . . . reinforces Chick's objection to Stevens's racist, 'go slow' rationalizations" (233). According to Polk, Stevens's views are undermined by the references to the smoke that he blows (135). Dussere writes that Stevens's authority is undercut by appearances in Faulkner's other novels where he "is the very image of the obtuse liberal" (52).
  12. Faulkner's denial is problematic; he disowns Stevens, but he does not denounce him. In an entry in his notebook, Malcolm Cowley recalls Faulkner saying that "Gavin Stevens was not speaking for the author but for the best type of liberal Southerner, that is how they feel about the Negroes" (110–11).
  13. Peavy argues that the "go slow" tactics of Southern moderates, advocated by Faulkner, were an attempt to deny (by forever delaying) social equality to people of color. Towner contends that Faulkner's segregationist stance is the product of his "belie[f], at base, only in individual reality" (127). Dussere maintains that the Southern approach to desegregation is informed by a notion of Southern honor (52).

14. This regional loyalty argument also appears in Faulkner's interviews. See *Lion* 262. In an essay that provides a useful counterpoint to mine, Kartiganer offers a more sympathetic reading of Stevens and maintains that, as used by Stevens, the term "homogeneity" includes Lucas in a regional identity.
15. The notion that omnipotence can be achieved by exclusion is also suggested in the Lacanian script, which is obsessed with the phallus as the figure of difference that authorizes meaning and identity. Even while Lacan acknowledges that the phallus is only a signifier, still, given its role in the securing (never secure) of subjectivity, he calls it "the transcendental signifier" (Eagleton 168) and seems to hold out the hope of transcendence through repression.
16. Several scholars have stressed the critical importance of Lucas's claim to a receipt. And, as they rightly observe, Faulkner does give Lucas the last word. See Millgate 220; Gwin 96; Moreland 67–68; Dussere 54; Towner 33.
17. Lucas Beauchamp makes his first appearance in *Go Down, Moses*, where he engages in a number of power struggles, but ultimately rejects the dominant role in a binary so as to preserve a loving relationship with his wife, Mollie. See my *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*, 163–64, and Davis 136–40.

## Works Cited

- Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon, 1988.
- Blotner, Joseph. *Faulkner: A Biography*. 2 vols. New York: Random, 1974.
- Cowley, Malcolm. *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944–1962*. New York: Viking, 1966.
- Cullen, John B. and Floyd C. Watkins. *Old Times in the Faulkner Country*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1961.
- Davis, Thadious M. *Games of Property: Law, Race, Gender, and Faulkner's Go Down, Moses*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.
- Doyle, Donald H. *Faulkner's County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001.
- Dussere, Eric. "The Debts of History: Southern Honor, Affirmative Action, and Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*." *Faulkner Journal* 17.1 (2001): 37–57.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983.
- Faulkner, William. 1942. *Go Down, Moses*. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- . "Interview with Russell Howe." *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926–1962*. Ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate. New York: Random, 1968.
- . 1948. *Intruder in the Dust*. New York: Vintage, 1991.

- . "Mississippi." 1954. *Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters*. Ed. James B. Meriwether. London: Chatto, 1967. 11–43.
- . "On Fear: Deep South in Labor: Mississippi." 1956. *Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters*. Ed. James B. Meriwether. London: Chatto, 1967. 92–106.
- Fowler, Doreen. *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1997.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud*. 24 vols. Ed. and trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1961.
- Gallop, Jane. *Reading Lacan*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.
- Gwin, Minrose C. *The Feminine and Faulkner: Reading (Beyond) Sexual Difference*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990.
- Irwin, John T. *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975.
- Kartiganer, Donald M. "Faulkner's Comic Narrative of Community." *A Gathering of Evidence: Essays on William Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust*. Ed. Michel Gresset and Patrick Samway. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's UP, 2004. 131–49.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 1966. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Lydenberg, Robin. "Freud's Uncanny Narratives." *PMLA* 112 (1997): 1072–86.
- Mellard, James M. *Using Lacan, Reading Fiction*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991.
- Millgate, Michael. *The Achievement of William Faulkner*. New York: Vintage, 1963.
- Moreland, Richard C. "Faulkner's Continuing Education: From Self-Reflection to Embarrassment." *Faulkner At One Hundred: Retrospect and Prospect*. Ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000. 60–69.
- Morris, Wesley with Barbara Alverson Morris. *Reading Faulkner*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1993.
- Peavy, Charles. *Go Slow, Now: Faulkner and the Race Question*. Eugene: U of Oregon P, 1964.
- Polk, Noel. "Man in the Middle: Faulkner and the Southern White Moderate." *Faulkner and Race*. Ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1987. 130–51.
- Schmitz, Neil. "Faulkner and the Post-Confederate." *Faulkner in Cultural Context*. Ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1997. 241–62.
- Snead, James A. *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels*. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Sundquist, Eric J. *Faulkner: The House Divided*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983.
- Taylor, Walter. *Faulkner's Search for a South*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983.

- Towner, Theresa M. *Faulkner on the Color Line: The Later Novels*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000.
- Weinstein, Philip M. *What Else But Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
- Williamson, Joel. *William Faulkner and Southern History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Wilson, Edmund. *Cannibals and Christians*. New York: Farrar, 1958.