

FAULKNER: MODERN FICTION?

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it...

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small.

Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction" (1919; 1925), in *The Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego: Harvest, 1984), 149–50.

Faulkner thus helped a primitive and rural world that until then had seemed to demand a codified and descriptive realism to achieve novelistic modernity: in his hands, a violent, tribal civilization, impressed with the mark of biblical mythologies, opposed in every respect to urban modernity...became the privileged object of one of the most daring exercises in style of the century.

Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004), 337.

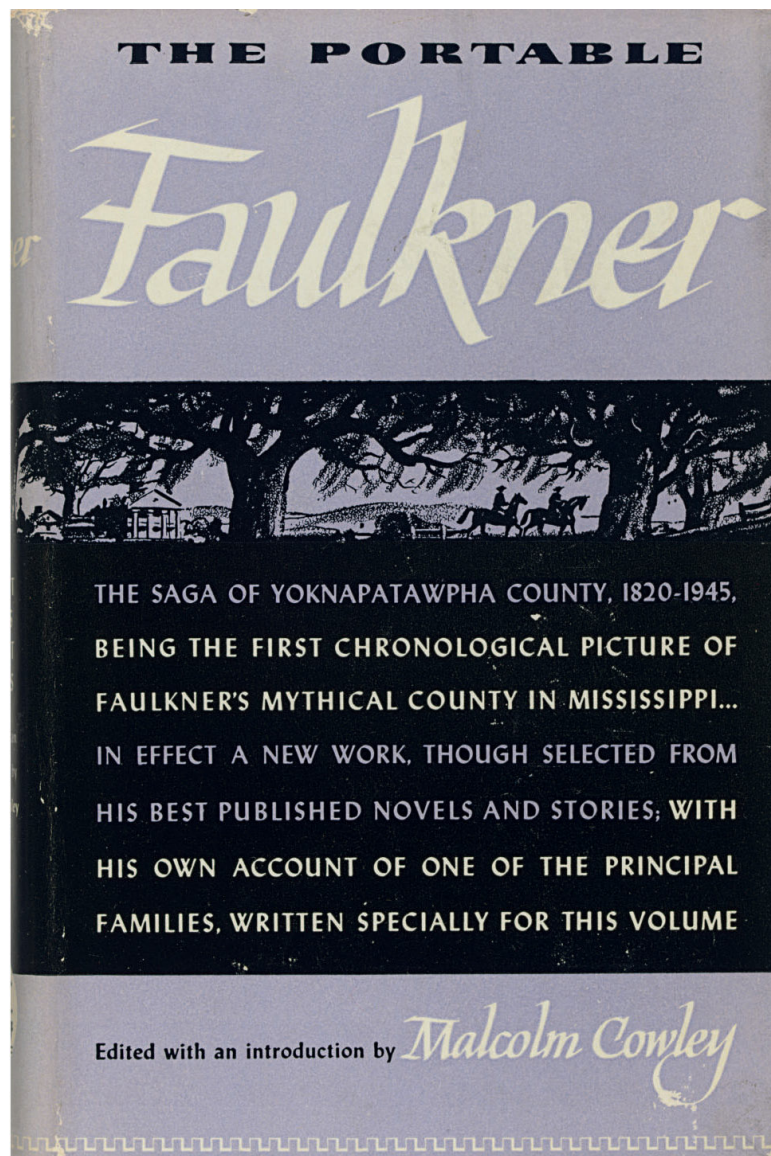
Faulkner's technique dazzled me, apart from the fact that he is one of the great novelists of the twentieth century. I believe that, for a Latin American writer, reading his books at the time I did was very useful, because they provided a valuable set of techniques for describing a reality that, in a certain sense, had a great deal in common with Faulkner's reality, that of the South of the United States.

Mario Vargas Llosa interviewed in 1989, qtd. in Casanova, 344.

FAULKNER ON “COLORED INK”

But the main reason [to reject the editorial addition of linebreaks dividing different times in the Benjy section] is, a break indicates an objective change in tempo, while the objective picture here should be a continuous whole, since the thought transference is subjective; i.e., in Ben’s mind and not in the reader’s eye. I think italics are necessary to establish for the reader Benjy’s confusion; that unbroken-surfaced confusion of an idiot which is outwardly a dynamic and logical coherence. To gain this, by using breaks it will be necessary to write an induction for each transference. I wish publishing was advanced enough to use colored ink for such, as I argued with you and Hal [Harrison Smith] in the speak-easy that day. But the form in which you now have it is pretty tough. It presents a most dull and poorly articulated picture to my eye. If something must be done, it were better to re-write this whole section objectively, like the 4th section. I think it is rotten, as is. But if you won’t have it so, I’ll just have to save the idea until publishing grows up to it.

Faulkner to Ben Wasson [early summer, 1929], in *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner (New York: Random House, 1977), 43–44. Cf. Joel Deshayes and Peter Stoicheff, “Colour-coded chronological sequencing of Benjy’s section,” http://drc.usask.ca/projects/faulkner/main/benjy_spectrum.htm, in *The Sound and the Fury: a Hypertext Edition*, ed. Stoicheff et al. University of Saskatchewan, 2003. <http://www.usask.ca/english/faulkner>.



The Portable Faulkner, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1946), cover, christies.com.

FAULKNER ON “THE END OF MAN”

I decline to accept the end of man.... I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

William Faulkner, speech at the Nobel Prize banquet, Stockholm, December 10, 1950, nobelprize.org.

FAULKNER'S MARVELOUS REAL

In his attempts to explain the fissures within American histories and their historiographical patterns, Faulkner too, like [Alejo] Carpentier, found that discursive hybridity—in this case a blending of history and the real, fantasy and the imaginary—unavoidably forms the warp and woof of New World narratives, extending north and south of the border between Latin and Anglo America. The South defined by this border, however, is not an exotic counterpoint lacking real contact with the world of historical significance. On the contrary, Faulkner's global South extends across this imaginary divide of the Americas, acknowledging their real historical kinship and difference.

Ramón Saldívar, “Faulkner and the World Culture of the Global South,” *Fifty Years After Faulkner*, ed. Jay Watson and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 17.