

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Office hours: Monday 2 p.m., or by appointment

March 1, 2021. Faulkner (2).

review: narration

- ▶ interior monologue, but the “stream” is not all “consciousness”
- ▶ problems of perspective (bias, confusion, vision)
 - ▶ It was the sweetest thing I ever saw. (21)
 - ▶ Like somehow you was looking at yourself and your doings outen his eyes. (125)

review: language

- ▶ dialect writing, but relation to Standard is complex
 - ▶ Faulkner's relation to literary convention is also complex
 - ▶ the most fluent talkers are the least attractive characters (Peabody, Whitfield)
- ▶ language can exceed characters' speech
 - ▶ to say what they do not have access to
 - ▶ to say what Faulkner feels like saying

technique (I)

My mother is a fish. (84; qtd. by N.E.)

technique (2)

They had laid her in it reversed. Cash made it clock-shape, like this



with every joint and seam bevelled and scrubbed with the plane, tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket, and they had laid her in it head to foot so it wouldn't crush her dress. It was her wedding dress and it had a flare-out bottom, and they had laid her head to foot in it so the dress could spread out, and they had made her a veil out of a mosquito bar so the auger holes in her face wouldn't show. (88; qtd. by A.H.)

technique (3)

I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because in the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon. It's not that I wouldn't and will not it's that it is too soon too soon too soon. (120; qtd. by [noadeo](#) and [M.L.](#))

“Vardaman”

In his inaugural address, [Mississippi governor] James K. Vardaman declared that the growing tendency of the negro to commit criminal assault on white women is nothing more or less than the manifestation of the racial desire for social equality...Vardaman said: “As a race he is deteriorating morally every day. Time has demonstrated that he is more criminal as a free man than as a slave.”... The governor also declares that the people of the nation should rise up and demand the repeal of the Fifteenth amendment.

Washington Post, January 20, 1904: 1. [ProQuest Historical Newspapers](#).

An effort to rid the Constitution of the United States of the Fifteenth Amendment will be made within the next few days by Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi. For twenty years Mr. Vardaman has been working to this end...In his propaganda for the disfranchisement of the negro he has lectured in nearly every part of the United States.

New York Times, December 20, 1914: 10. [ProQuest](#).

William Cuthbert Falkner

1897 b. Mississippi

1918 joins RAF as “Faulkner” in Toronto

1919 briefly at U. of Mississippi as student

1924 *The Marble Faun* (book of poems)

1925 travels in Europe

1926 invents Yoknapatawpha in early work

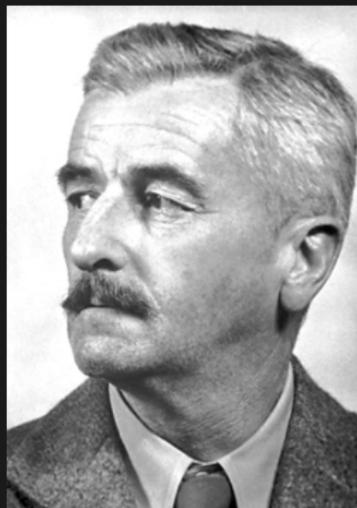
1929 *The Sound and the Fury*

1929 works nights at Ole Miss power plant

1929 composes *As I Lay Dying* rapidly

1930 *As I Lay Dying*: good notices

1931 *Sanctuary* (scandalous hit)



Falkner to Faulkner

1931 *Nouvelle Revue Française* essay on Faulkner

1932–33 *Sanctuary, As I Lay Dying* translated into French

1934–35 *Autour d'une mère*, French theatre version

1938–39 *Sound and the Fury* in French; acclaimed by Sartre

1950 Nobel prize

1932–51 occasional Hollywood work

1946 *Portable Faulkner* (ed. Cowley) popularizes WF in USA,
cements Yoknapatawpha mythology

1948 Film deal for *Intruder in the Dust* (\$50,000)

1962 d.

global Faulkner

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.

mi maestro William Faulkner

Gabriel García Márquez, Nobel lecture, 1982, nobelprize.org.

Faulkner's technique dazzled me....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 in 1989, qtd. in Casanova, 344.

short break

technique (4): discussion

Before us the thick dark current runs. It talks up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad, the yellow surface dimpled monstrously... (141; qtd. by [elj](#))

- ▶ What is the significance of language to the river-crossing scene? Range forward from the start of Darl's chapter. Use formal detail to answer the question.

“It’s been there a long time, that ere bridge,” Quick says.

“The Lord has kept it there, you mean,” Uncle Billy says. ”I dont know ere a man that’s touched hammer to it in twenty-five years. (88)

“tour de force”

Sometimes technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it. That is *tour de force* and the finished work is simply a matter of fitting bricks neatly together, since the writer knows probably every single word right to the end before he puts the first one down. This happened with *As I Lay Dying*...

I simply imagined a group of people and subjected them to the simple universal natural catastrophes which are flood and fire with a simple natural motive to give direction to their progress.

Faulkner, interviewed by Jean Stein, *Paris Review* 12 (Spring 1956).

next

▶ finish the novel