

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M. Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This collection of essays explores key dimensions of Faulkner's widespread cultural import. Drawing on a wide range of cultural theory, ten major Faulkner scholars examine closely the enduring whole of Faulkner's oeuvre in clearly written and intellectually provocative essays. Bringing into focus the broader cultural contexts that give his work its resonance, the collection will be particularly useful for the student seeking a critical introduction to Faulkner, while serving also the dedicated scholar interested in discerning recent trends in Faulkner criticism.

Together, these essays map Faulkner's present-day meaning by exploring his relations to modernism and postmodernism, to twentieth-century mass culture, to European and Latin American fiction, to issues of gender difference, and, above all, to the conflicted scene of U.S. race relations. Neither assuming in advance his literary "greatness" nor insisting that his canonical status be revoked, the essays ask instead, What is at stake, today, in *reading* Faulkner? What company does he keep? In what ways does his work intersect with current debates on race and gender? How does his practice respond to today's questions about the individual subject's insertion within broader cultural activities? Why, in short, should we read him now?

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M.
Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
WILLIAM FAULKNER

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO LITERATURE

The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature
edited by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge

The Cambridge Companion to Dante
edited by Rachel Jacoff

The Cambridge Chaucer Companion
edited by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann

The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre
edited by Richard Beadle

The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies
edited by Stanley Wells

The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama
edited by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway

The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell
edited by Thomas N. Corns

The Cambridge Companion to Milton
edited by Dennis Danielson

The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism
edited by Stuart Curran

The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce
edited by Derek Attridge

The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen
edited by James McFarlane

The Cambridge Companion to Brecht
edited by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks

The Cambridge Companion to Beckett
edited by John Pilling

The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot
edited by A. David Moody

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M. Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Cambridge Companion to
**WILLIAM
FAULKNER**

Edited by Philip M. Weinstein
Swarthmore College



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M.
Weinstein
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and
to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995
Reprinted 1995, 1996, 1998

Typeset in Trump Mediaeval

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available

ISBN 0-521-42063-6 hardback
ISBN 0-521-42167-5 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Chronology of William Faulkner's Life and Works</i>	xv
<i>Abbreviations for Texts Cited</i>	xx
Introduction	1
PHILIP M. WEINSTEIN	

Part I. The Texts in the World

1 Faulkner and Modernism	17
RICHARD C. MORELAND	
2 Faulkner and Postmodernism	31
PATRICK O'DONNELL	
3 Faulkner and the Culture Industry	51
JOHN MATTHEWS	
4 Faulkner from a European Perspective	75
ANDRÉ BLEIKASTEN	
5 Looking for a Master Plan: Faulkner, Paredes, and the Colonial and Postcolonial Subject	96
RAMÓN SALDÍVAR	

PREFACE

Not just “another book on Faulkner”: when I accepted Cambridge University Press’s invitation to edit this *Companion to William Faulkner*, I insisted on that distinction. Free to gather together many of the best Faulknerians writing in the 1990s, I sought to convert the potential defects of an anthology into its virtues. The absence of a single guiding argument could become the presence of several provocative introductions. In place of a sustained, unified intelligence (engaged peripherally with other points of view), this book could foreground encounter itself – difference. It could emphasize what most literary studies pay lip service to but actually work to conceal: that the entity we call “Faulkner” exists, publicly, only in the plural, differentially construed according to the operative critical approach. *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner* is dedicated to introducing, to a broadly literate audience, several of the most compelling “Faulkners” of our time.

These various Faulkners are by no means the arbitrary constructions of willful critics. Rather, my nine fellow contributors come to Faulkner through critical procedures with their own cultural history, and I have urged these contributors to attend self-consciously to the orientations enabling their thought. All of them have – while revising their own work – read one or more of the neighboring essays, and at certain points specific convergences of ideas and claims take place. Taken together, this range of orientations gestures toward the

viii *Preface*

broader discursive field within which current commentary on Faulkner is being generated. The *Companion* makes no pretense of mapping that field exhaustively, but it does acknowledge that the field is necessarily prior to the writer being discussed within it. Ideally, the *Companion* sheds light simultaneously on the present-day significance of Faulkner's work and on many of the particular questions cultural critics of the 1990s have counted as significant.

In the Introduction I discuss in detail the kind of argument – its assumptions and implications – each contributor is making. But the point to emphasize here is that the volume as a whole is committed to producing an *accessible* Faulkner. This is no simple task, since making him accessible cannot mean making him “easy” (that would be a betrayal of his work's deliberate transgressions), nor can it mean reducing the terms of critical approach to a single vocabulary of assumptions and goals (that would be a betrayal of the tonic range of questions his work engages in the critical practice of the 1990s). Rather, “accessible” must mean the presentation of a Faulkner whom first-time readers can recognize, a Faulkner not trammelled up in a thick weave of previous commentaries and scholarly footnotes. And it must mean a Faulkner not uniquely pursuing his esoteric dreams but, instead, a Faulkner immersed in his broader culture's compelling debates. Readers already interested in such debates will recognize them here, and they will find in the *Companion's* various Faulkners both a “citizen” (however reluctant) of his time and place and a respondent (however reluctant) to our time and place.

Getting ten Faulknerians to collaborate on one volume has not lacked its frustrations, but this joint enterprise has been mainly an occasion of intellectual enrichment. Poring over one another's work, each of us ensconced hundreds (or thousands) of miles distant from each other, we persevered in our own parodic version of *Absalom's* Jefferson/Cambridge project of multiple authorship. I am grateful to each contributor for this provocative and unpredictable interchange. Likewise,

Preface

ix

I am grateful to Julie Greenblatt and T. Susan Chang (both at Cambridge University Press) for seeking out this volume and for then adroitly seeing it through. Finally, without the extraordinary achievement of William Faulkner there would have been no common focus for our energies, no body of texts through which we severally rehearse what it means to be subjects in culture, no “companion” to make possible this *Companion*.

CONTRIBUTORS

ANDRÉ BLEIKASTEN is Professor of American Literature at the Université de Strasbourg. His major work on Faulkner began with book-length studies in the 1970s of *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*, followed by many essays in scholarly journals and collections, culminating in *The Ink of Melancholy: Faulkner's Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August* (Indiana, 1990). His essay in this volume appeared in an earlier form in *Faulkner, His Contemporaries, and His Posterity*, ed. Waldeman Zacharasiewicz (Tübingen: Francke, 1993).

CHERYL LESTER is Associate Professor at the University of Kansas, where she teaches cultural studies, modern literature, and African-American literature and culture. She has written several essays on Faulkner and is currently completing a manuscript entitled *Faulkner and the Great Migration*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

JOHN MATTHEWS is Professor of English at Boston University. His contributions to Faulkner studies include the editorship of the *Faulkner Journal* and his major study *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Cornell, 1982). He has published widely in the scholarly journals on Faulkner and others, has written *The Sound and the Fury: Faulkner and the Lost Cause* (Twayne, 1991), and is now completing a study of framing devices in American literature.

RICHARD C. MORELAND, Associate Professor of English at Louisiana State University, is the author of *Faulkner and Modernism*:

xii *Contributors*

Rereading and Rewriting (Wisconsin, 1990). He has also written scholarly essays on Faulkner, Morrison, and the teaching of cross-cultural encounters in the new canon. He is currently at work on a project entitled "Domination and Democracy in Twain, Eliot, Ellison, and Morrison."

PATRICK O'DONNELL is Editor of *Modern Fiction Studies* and Professor of English at Purdue University. His work centers on modernism and postmodernism, and he has edited a number of anthologies focused on twentieth-century culture. His book-length studies include *Passionate Doubts: Designs of Interpretation in Contemporary American Fiction* (Iowa, 1986) and *Echo Chambers: Figuring Voice in Modern Narrative* (Iowa, 1992).

CAROLYN PORTER is Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. She has taught and published on a wide range of American writers and issues. Her work on Faulkner began with *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* (Wesleyan, 1981), and it has continued in the form of scholarly essays for conferences and in journals.

RAMÓN SALDÍVAR is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Stanford University. He is the author of *Figural Language in the Novel: The Flowers of Speech from Cervantes to Joyce* and *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. His teaching and research focus on literary criticism, nineteenth- and twentieth-century comparative literary studies, Chicano narrative, and cultural studies.

WARWICK WADLINGTON is Joan Negley Kelleher Centennial Professor of English at the University of Texas. His publications include *The Confidence Game in American Literature* (Princeton, 1975), *Reading Faulknerian Tragedy* (Cornell, 1988), and *As I Lay Dying: Stories out of Stories* (Twayne, 1992), as well as many scholarly essays on American fiction and culture.

PHILIP M. WEINSTEIN is Alexander Griswold Cummins Professor of English at Swarthmore College. He teaches and publishes on American, British, and comparative fiction. His books include *Henry James and the Requirements of the Imagination* (Harvard, 1971), *The Semantics of Desire: Changing Models of Identity from Dick-*

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M. Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contributors

xiii

ens to Joyce (Princeton, 1984), and *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* (Cambridge, 1992).

JUDITH BRYANT WITTENBERG is Professor of English and Acting Dean of the College at Simmons College. She teaches widely in American literature and culture. Her central work on Faulkner began with *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* (Nebraska, 1979), has continued in the form of many essays in scholarly journals, and is currently embodied in her serving as President of the Faulkner Society.

CHRONOLOGY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S LIFE AND WORKS

- 1897 William Cuthbert Falkner, first of four sons of Murry C. Falkner and Maud Butler Falkner, is born on September 25 in New Albany, Mississippi. Murry Falkner is an administrator for the railroad built by his legendary grandfather, William C. Falkner – a man known as the “Old Colonel” and widely remembered for his achievements as soldier, landowner, lawyer, businessman, politician, and writer. (The family name was spelled “Falkner” until WF added the “u” in 1919.)
- 1902 The Falkner family moves to Oxford, Mississippi.
- 1914 After an indifferent secondary education (ceasing after the tenth grade), WF accepts a mentor relationship with Phil Stone (four years older), reading widely in classics and contemporary literature. Stone will serve for many years as a sometimes unwanted adviser, helping WF get his early works published.
- 1916–17 WF begins to write verse and to submit graphic and literary work for the University of Mississippi yearbook.
- 1918 WF and Estelle Oldham, childhood sweethearts, do not manage to elope. She marries Cornell Franklin. WF attempts to enlist in the U.S. Air Corps to fight in World War I, is rejected because of insufficient height, goes to Toronto and (masquerading as an Englishman) joins the Royal Air Force training program. He returns to Oxford after the war, feigning war wounds and military ex-

xvi *Chronology*

- plots (his flight training was actually completed only in December, a month after the armistice).
- 1919–20 WF enrolls as a special student at the University of Mississippi, studies French, writes a play entitled *Marionettes*, completes his first volume of verse – *The Marble Faun* – which (with Phil Stone’s help) will eventually be accepted for publication.
- 1921–23 WF works in a New York bookstore managed by Elizabeth Prall, Sherwood Anderson’s future wife. He returns to Oxford to serve as university postmaster, a job he notoriously mishandles; in 1923 he is fired from it.
- 1924 *The Marble Faun* is published in December.
- 1925 WF travels to New Orleans and is introduced (through Elizabeth Prall) to Sherwood Anderson and his literary circle, a group associated with the avant-garde literary magazine *The Double Dealer*. WF spends six months with this group, developing a serious interest in writing fiction, not poetry, and completing his first novel, *Soldiers’ Pay*, a “lost generation” story centering on the betrayals of a war-wounded aviator. Anderson’s publisher, Horace Liveright, accepts it for publication. WF spends the second half of 1925 traveling in Europe, living in Paris, reading contemporary literature, and writing reviews; he returns to Oxford by Christmas.
- 1926 *Soldiers’ Pay* is published in February.
- 1927 WF’s second novel, *Mosquitoes*, set in New Orleans and attentive to the avant-garde arts scene, is published in April by Liveright.
- 1928 Liveright refuses WF’s third (and most ambitious to date) novel, *Flags in the Dust*. This novel inaugurates WF’s fictional history of his own region and is accepted eventually by Harcourt, Brace, on condition that it be shortened. Throughout the 1920s, WF continues to see Estelle Oldham Franklin and her two sons during her visits to Oxford. He begins writing *The Sound and the Fury* in the spring and finishes it by early fall.
- 1929 Shortened and renamed, *Flags in the Dust* is published as *Sartoris* in January. WF begins writing *Sanctuary*.

Chronology

xvii

- The Sound and the Fury*, his first indisputable modernist masterpiece, is rejected by Harcourt, Brace but accepted by Cape and Smith. Estelle Oldham Franklin's divorce is finalized in April; WF marries her in June. *The Sound and the Fury* is published in October. During this fall, WF works nights at a power plant, completing a first draft of *As I Lay Dying* (his next modernist masterpiece) in under seven weeks.
- 1930 *As I Lay Dying* is published in October by Cape and Smith, giving WF's fictional county its name of Yoknapatawpha. WF buys Rowan Oak, an elegant Oxford estate. In need of funds (a need that will continue for the next twenty years), WF begins aggressively to market his short stories along with his novels, the former often paying better.
- 1931 *Sanctuary*, begun before publication of the two previously completed masterpieces and first conceived as a potboiler, is heavily revised before being published in February. Its sexual violence attracts the attention of Hollywood, and WF soon begins an off-and-on twenty-year history as a scriptwriter for MGM and Warner Bros. (The film versions of Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* and Chandler's *Big Sleep* both contain much Faulknerian dialogue.) *These Thirteen*, a collection of WF's stories, is published in September.
- 1932 *Light in August*, WF's first major treatment of racial turmoil, is published in February by Smith and Haas.
- 1933 WF's second volume of poems, *A Green Bough*, is published in April. Jill Faulkner is born in June. *The Story of Temple Drake*, a film version of *Sanctuary*, is released.
- 1934–35 *Doctor Martino and Other Stories*, a collection of detective stories, is published in April. WF works on *Absalom, Absalom!*, his most ambitious novel about the South so far, as well as his most deliberately modernist work, both in Hollywood and in Oxford. He interrupts *Absalom* to complete *Pylon*, a brief, feverish novel about daredevil stunt pilots, in a few months, then re-

xviii *Chronology*

- turns to *Absalom* after the death of his youngest brother, Dean, in an air crash. (WF, himself an amateur aviator, had encouraged Dean to learn to fly.) *Pylon* is published in March 1935.
- 1936 *Absalom, Absalom!*, is published in October by Random House, thereafter WF's permanent publisher.
- 1938 *The Unvanquished*, a collection of Civil War stories, is published in February. WF writes *The Wild Palms*, a hybrid novel composed of two intertwined stories. He buys a farm outside of Oxford.
- 1939 *The Wild Palms* is published in January. WF is elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Despite previous attention from French critics such as Malraux and Sartre, WF only now begins to receive searching commentary from American critics.
- 1940 *The Hamlet*, the first novel of the Snopes trilogy, is published in April.
- 1942 *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories*, WF's broadest and most sustained scrutiny of black–white relations, is published in May.
- 1946 Malcolm Cowley's edition of *The Portable Faulkner* is published in May by the Viking Press. Except for *Sanctuary*, WF's novels are out of print; Cowley's ably introduced volume makes WF's work inexpensively available to a large reading public.
- 1948 *Intruder in the Dust*, a sequel to the Lucas Beauchamp materials of *Go Down, Moses*, is published in September. The novel's overt interest in Southern racial turmoil secures large sales and signals WF's willingness to speak out on social issues. WF is elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1949 *Knight's Gambit*, a collection of detective stories, is published in November.
- 1950 *Collected Stories* is published in August. WF wins the Nobel Prize for Literature, travels with his daughter Jill to Stockholm, and delivers his famous Nobel Prize acceptance speech.
- 1951 *Collected Stories* is awarded the National Book Award.

Chronology

xix

Requiem for a Nun, a reprise of the Temple Drake materials in *Sanctuary*, written in a form both novelistic and theatrical, is published in September. France awards him the Legion of Honor. From this point on, WF's work receives critical (indeed "canonical") attention and brings him financial security. Increasingly, he writes and speaks out on political (especially racial) issues, his position costing him support from many fellow Southerners because of his attack on racism, while disappointing liberals because of his gradualist approach to desegregation. WF travels extensively during the 1950s as a sort of cultural ambassador for the State Department.

- 1954 *A Fable*, WF's most premeditated novel, a story of World War I in terms of the Christ fable, is published in August. It wins the Pulitzer prize.
- 1955 *Big Woods*, a collection of stories, is published.
- 1957 *The Town*, the second novel of the Snopes trilogy, is published in May. WF teaches as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. He will alternate residence between Charlottesville and Oxford until his death.
- 1959 *The Mansion*, the final volume of the Snopes trilogy, is published in November.
- 1962 *The Reivers*, Faulkner's last and deliberately light-hearted novel, is published in June. A month later, on July 6, WF dies unexpectedly (probably of a heart attack) in a clinic at Byhalia, Mississippi, where he had been recurrently hospitalized for alcoholism and more recently for treatment following the last of many horseback-riding accidents. His funeral takes place the next day in Oxford.
- 1963 *The Reivers* wins the Pulitzer prize.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR TEXTS CITED

- AA *Absalom, Absalom!: The Corrected Text*. 1936. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- CS *Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House, 1950.
- ESPL *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*, ed. James B. Meriwether. New York: Random House, 1966.
- FAB *A Fable*. New York: Random House, 1954.
- FMS *Faulkner's MGM Screenplays*, ed. Bruce F. Kavin. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- FU *Faulkner in the University*, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner. New York: Random House, 1959.
- GDM *Go Down, Moses*. 1942. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- LA *Light in August: The Corrected Text*. 1932. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- LG *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926–1962*, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate. New York: Random House, 1968.
- SF *The Sound and the Fury: The Corrected Text*. 1929. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- SL *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph L. Blotner. New York: Random House, 1977.
- TH *Thinking of Home: William Faulkner's Letters to His Mother and Father, 1918–1925*, ed. James G. Watson. New York: Norton, 1992.

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M. Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Abbreviations

xxi

- US *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph L. Blotner. New York: Random House, 1979.
- WP *The Wild Palms*. 1939. New York: Vintage, 1966.

Cambridge University Press

0521421675 - The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner - Edited by Philip M.
Weinstein

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
WILLIAM FAULKNER