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MACMILLAN MODERN NOVELISTS
WILLIAM FAULKNER

David Dowling

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MACMILLAN

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'You seem to be spending too much time thinking about Bill Faulkner.'
C. Israel, 'Encounter with William Faulkner',
Dialogue 2, 2 (1969) 113.

General Editor's Preface

The death of the novel has often been announced, and part of the secret of its obstinate vitality must be its capacity for growth, adaptation, self-renewal and even self-transformation; like some vigorous organism in a speeded-up Darwinian ecosystem, it adapts itself quickly to a changing world. War and revolution, economic crisis and social change, radically new ideologies such as Marxism and Freudianism, have made this century unprecedented in human history in the speed and extent of change, but the novel has shown an extraordinary capacity to find new forms and techniques and to accommodate new ideas and conceptions of human nature and human experience, and even to take up new positions on the nature of fiction itself.

In the generations immediately preceding and following 1914, the novel underwent a radical redefinition of its nature and possibilities. The present series of monographs is devoted to the novelists who created the modern novel and to those who, in their turn, either continued and extended, or reacted against and rejected, the traditions established during that period of intense exploration and experiment. It includes a number of those who lived and wrote in the nineteenth century but whose innovative contribution to the art of fiction makes it impossible to ignore them in any account of the origins of the modern novel; it also includes the so-called 'modernists' and those who in the mid- and late-twentieth century have emerged as outstanding practitioners of this genre. The scope is, inevitably, international; not only, in the migratory and exile-haunted world of our century, do writers refuse to heed national frontiers – 'English' literature lays claim to Conrad the Pole, Henry James the American, and Joyce the Irishman – but

geniuses such as Flaubert, Dostoevski and Kafka have had an influence on the fiction of many nations.

Each volume in the series is intended to provide an introduction to the fiction of the writer concerned, both for those approaching him or her for the first time and for those who are already familiar with some parts of the achievement in question and now wish to place it in the context of the total *oeuvre*. Although essential information relating to the writer's life and times is given, usually in an opening chapter, the approach is primarily critical and the emphasis is not upon 'background' or generalisations but upon close examination of important texts. Where an author is notably prolific, major texts have been selected for detailed attention but an attempt has also been made to convey, more summarily, a sense of the nature and quality of the author's work as a whole. Those who want to read further will find suggestions in the select bibliography included in each volume. Many novelists are, of course, not only novelists but also poets, essayists, biographers, dramatists, travel writers and so forth; many have practised shorter forms of fiction; and many have written letters or kept diaries that constitute a significant part of their literary output. A brief study cannot hope to deal with all these in detail, but where the shorter fiction and the non-fictional writings, public and private, have an important relationship to the novels, some space has been devoted to them.

NORMAN PAGE

Chronology

- 1825 William Clark Falkner ('The Old Colonel') born in Knox County, Tennessee.
- 1842 He arrives in Mississippi.
- 1846–7 He serves in the Mexican War.
- 1848 John Wesley Thompson Falkner ('The Young Colonel') born.
- 1849 W. C. Falkner kills Robert Hindman, is tried and acquitted.
- 1851 W. C. Falkner kills E. W. Morris, is tried and acquitted.
- 1861 Mississippi secedes; W. C. Falkner and the Magnolia Rifles enter the Civil War.
- 1862 Replaced as regiment commander, W. C. Falkner returns to Mississippi.
- 1863 He forms the Partisan Rangers and reenters the war.
- 1870 J. W. T. Falkner's son Murry Cuthbert is born.
- 1871–2 W. C. Falkner, Richard Thurmond and others organise a company to build a railroad.
- 1881–4 W. C. Falkner writes *The White Rose of Memphis*, tours Europe, writes *Rapid Ramblings in Europe*.
- 1885 J. W. T. Falkner moves his family to Oxford Mississippi.
- 1889 After being elected to the state legislature W. C. Falkner is shot by Thurmond.
- 1896 Murry Falkner marries Maud Butler and they settle in New Albany.
- 1897 William Cuthbert Falkner is born 25 September.
- 1898 Murry Falkner is appointed treasurer of the railroad and the family moves to Ripley.
- 1899 Murry C. Falkner Jr is born.
- 1901 John Wesley Thompson Falkner III is born.

- 1914 W. F. quits school after several years of increasing resistance; friendship with Phil Stone.
- 1915 W. F. quits eleventh grade.
- 1916 W. F. works briefly in his grandfather's bank but gravitates to student activities at the University of Mississippi.
- 1918 Estelle Oldham engaged; W. F. tries to enlist, is rejected, changes name to Faulkner and enlists in the RAF (Canada); WWI ends while he is still in training; he returns to Oxford.
- 1919 First published poem 'L'Après-Midi d'un Faune' in *New Republic*; W. F. enrolls at university, publishes poems and drawings.
- 1920 Resigns from university but writes *The Marionettes* for student drama group.
- 1922 Serves as scoutmaster and postmaster.
- 1924 *The Marble Faun* (Boston: Four Seas).
- 1925 In New Orleans Faulkner writes for the *Times-Picayune*; travels in Europe, returns to Oxford.
- 1926 *Soldiers' Pay* (New York: Horace Liveright).
- 1927 *Mosquitoes* (New York: Boni and Liveright); Liveright rejects *Flags in the Dust*.
- 1928 *The Sound and the Fury* written.
- 1929 *Sartoris* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co.); marries Estelle Franklin; *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith).
- 1930 Buys antebellum house 'Rowan Oak'; *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith).
- 1931 Alabama Faulkner is born and dies; *Sanctuary* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith); *These Thirteen* (short stories) (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith).
- 1932 Works in Hollywood; Murry Falkner dies; *Light in August* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas).
- 1933 *A Green Bough* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas); Jill Faulkner born; W. F. buys an aeroplane.
- 1934 W. F. begins *Absalom, Absalom!*; writes several stories that become *The Unvanquished*; *Doctor Martino and Other Stories* (14 stories) (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas).

- 1935 *Pylon* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas);
Dean Faulkner dies in an air crash.
- 1936 *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House).
- 1938 *The Unvanquished* (New York: Random House).
- 1939 *The Wild Palms* (New York: Random House).
- 1940 Mammy Caroline Barr dies; *The Hamlet* (New York:
Random House).
- 1942 *Go Down, Moses* (New York: Random House).
- 1943 W. F. begins *A Fable*.
- 1946 *The Portable Faulkner*, ed. Malcolm Cowley.
- 1948 *Intruder in the Dust* (New York: Random House).
- 1949 *Knight's Gambit* (six stories) (New York: Random House).
- 1950 W. F. wins the Nobel Prize; *Collected Stories* (forty-two
stories) (New York: Random House).
- 1951 *Notes on a Horsethief* (later in *A Fable*) (Greenville, Miss.:
Levee Press); *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random
House).
- 1954 *A Fable* (New York: Random House).
- 1955 *Big Woods* (New York: Random House).
- 1957 Writer-in-residence at University of Virginia; *The Town*
(New York: Random House).
- 1959 *The Mansion* (New York: Random House).
- 1960 Maud Butler Falkner dies.
- 1962 *The Reivers* (New York: Random House); W. F. dies 6
July.