



## **Novels 1930-1935: As I Lay Dying / Sanctuary / Light in August / Pylon**

*William Faulkner , Noel Polk (Editor) , Joseph Blotner (Editor)*

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Between 1930 and 1935, William Faulkner came into full possession of the genius and creativity that made him one of America's finest writers of the twentieth century. The four novels in this *Library of America* collection display an astonishing range of characters and treatments in his Depression-era fiction.

*As I Lay Dying* (1930) is a combination of comedy, horror, and compassion, a narrative woven from the inarticulate desires of a peasant family in conflict. It presents the conscious, unconscious, and sometimes hallucinatory impressions of the husband, daughter, and four sons of Addie Bundren, the long-suffering matriarch of her rural Mississippi clan, as the family marches her body through fire and flood to its grave in town.

*Sanctuary* (1931) is a novel of sex and social class, of collapsed gentility and amoral justice, that moves from the back roads of Mississippi and the fleshpots of Memphis to the courthouse of Jefferson and the appalling spectacle of popular vengeance. With its fascinating portraits of Popeye, a sadistic gangster and rapist, and Temple Drake, a debutante with an affinity for evil, it offers a horrific and sometimes comically macabre vision of modern life.

*Light in August* (1932) incorporates Faulkner's religious vision of the hopeful stubbornness of ordinary life. The guileless Lena Grove, in search of the father of her unborn child; the disgraced minister Gail Hightower, who dreams of Confederate cavalry charges; Byron Bunch, who thought working Saturdays would keep a man out of trouble, and the desperate, enigmatic Joe Christmas, consumed by his mixed ancestry—all find their lives entangled in the inexorable succession of love, birth, and death.

*Pylon* (1935), a tale of barnstorming aviators in the carnival atmosphere of an air show in a southern city, examines the bonds of desire and loyalty among three men and a woman, all characters without a past. Dramatizing what, in accepting his Nobel Prize, Faulkner called “the human heart in conflict with itself,” it illustrates how he became one of the great humanists of twentieth-century literature.

The *Library of America* edition of Faulkner's work publishes, for the first time, new, corrected texts of these four works. Manuscripts, typescripts, galleys, and published editions have been collated to produce versions that are free of the changes introduced by the original editors and that are faithful to Faulkner's intentions.

## Novels 1930-1935: *As I Lay Dying* / *Sanctuary* / *Light in August* / *Pylon* Details

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## **From Reader Review Novels 1930-1935: As I Lay Dying / Sanctuary / Light in August / Pylon for online ebook**

### **Laura says**

Ummm. Well I finished it, that is saying something. I only read As I Lay Dying not this whole book. I kind of liked it but it was hard to read, like homework. It was sometimes hard to follow and most importantly it was very very sad. They style of every chapter in a different voice was challenging for me, I almost had to write out a family tree to keep track of who was who. The vernacular was tricky to follow as well. Kind of like reading poetry or Shakespeare. I am glad I read it.

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### **Melanie says**

Im just reading Sanctuary, already read As I Lay Dying and Light in August, my library didn't have Sanctuary on its own

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### **Martin Bihl says**

Sometimes it's the book and sometimes it's the reader. So this time I'm taking the hit, because for some reason I just couldn't focus on Pylon. I know it had interesting and complex characters. I know it had an artful and subtle narrative style. And the story itself was compelling. So why couldn't I sit down and lose myself in it? I don't know. I do know i found it distracting that Faulkner decided to set the novel in New Orleans, but then decided to replace all the place-names with New-Orleans-sounding alternatives. Why not just say Canal Street? Why not just say Arnaud's? Because he wanted to cast aspersions on the airport and the movers and shakers of NOLA without getting sued? I don't know...

[note - no review of As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary and Light in August here, because I read them elsewhere - if you care...]

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### **Jo-Ann says**

I've purchased the Library of America Faulkner Novels 1930-1935 and picked up the volume to read over the holidays.

I finished "As I Lay Dying" and came to agree with Peabody (p. 162) "God Almighty, why didn't Anse carry you to the nearest sawmill and stick your leg in the saw? That would have cured it. Then you all could have stuck his head into the saw and cured a whole family...". This journey aroused admiration, anger, disgust, pity, humour, shock - not an easy and light read by any stretch. I am unfamiliar with some of the dialect and appreciated the glossary attached, yet found myself re-reading passages to determine the meaning, not always successfully, I might add. I am moved by the resilience of the family members to cope with hardship and tragedy, and find the perspectives of the onlookers add much to the perceptions I had developed myself of the individual members.

Can someone enlighten me on Faulkner's fascination with stream of consciousness writing??

When all is said and done, I could not put it down as I was driven to know the outcome of this odyssey. Anse's stubborn adherence to principles above all else points to the folly we humans encounter when we focus on the tree and overlook the surrounding forest.

Next comes "Sanctuary", which was a quick read and very challenging, given the treatment of Temple Drake among others. I must admit that I found her character unappealing, but certainly undeserving of the story line. I am not trying to be naive here, but at my point in life this is a very hard read as the mother of a university age daughter.

Gowan - self serving, cowardly; Narcissa - aptly named; Miss Jenny - my favourite character, loved her dry sense of humour and her shrewd evaluation of character; Popeye - one knows there must be circumstances contributing to his development but waiting until the end of the novel is difficult; Goodwin and Ruby - I found myself empathizing with them, but doesn't that baby ever get fed??? And then there's Horace...

I agree in general with Faulkner's evaluation of this novel as certainly written to cater to the masses who like sensationalism, sex, crime and violence and this sells to this day. However, there are parts of the novel that rise above every horrific detail that Faulkner packs in the story. Ruby's reluctant protection of Temple comes to mind, and the loyalty of Miss Reba's servant, Minnie. I'm sure there are others that don't immediately come to mind.

"Light in August" was deeply painful for the most part for me to read. Slavery and all its ancestral and descendant legacy is excavated and examined in unrelenting detail. While the treatment of African Americans is difficult enough, the legacy of this "peculiar institution" on the white slave holders is the most revealing of all. The damage seems to occur on a cellular level, and is rooted - to my mind - in the intense fear of retaliation of the slaves and in miscegenation. Black women had no choice, and it seems from this novel that white women in the antebellum and post Civil War South had no choice either in how their identity, autonomy and self-determination were subjugated to the interpretation of white males. This fear exists around the factually unsubstantiated heritage of Joe Christmas, and the relentless rejection of his own paternal grandfather who typically uses his own interpretation of Christian doctrine to justify his persecution. Then there is the scene where Joe enters the African American church and terrorizes them in turn. To my mind, the castration of Joe is inevitable in this narrative.

Not being either American or Southern - slavery in Canada certainly existed far longer than it should have and we have our own share of racism most recently in our country's treatment of Aboriginal people - I feel like a bystander watching much of this scarring legacy play out. The deeper tragedy here is that opposing sides share blood and kinship ties that many times are abandoned in the face of societal mores that are fierce and entrenched. It takes a particular degree of moral courage - witness the Burden family story - to withstand the pressure and defy these mores. This is a reason but not an excuse.

Finally, there is "Pylon", certainly different in theme, although there are some dark moments. One may say that people at least engage in what brings passion to them, in one case giving up their life. One may argue that motivation is questionable, but this is human nature. I seemed to gravitate to the report's story line more than anything else; even benevolent intentions can have troublesome consequences.

My appetite is whetted now for more Faulkner.

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## Martha says

Faulkner is a brilliant writer and is very important to American literature. I read "As I Lay Dying" and found

it quite a challenge. It is difficult to get past the dialect, and the fact that fifteen different characters narrate the story. Plus, the events are not always chronological, nor do they always make sense. This book is supposed to be funny - the smell of the corpse the family doesn't seem to be bothered by, Anse's (the father) excuse for not working - that he sweats too much, and the new set of teeth that he is so set on getting. It is hard to catch these humorous moments because of the difficulty of the text.

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### **Mark Dickson says**

I just finished rereading "As I Lay Dying" after watching James Franco's film treatment. The depths of this cursed family is unmatched in literature I've read. It is a journey through Hell with no breath of redemption possible.

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### **Erin says**

I just read As I Lay Dying. Will return for the other novels.

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### **Joan says**

Great collection. Pylon, one of Faulkner's least popular novels, is one of the weirder books I've ever read. But it's still Faulkner, and still brilliant and compelling. And unlike the writing of anyone else.

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### **Charles Fresquez says**

Now that I've read all this Faulkner, for some reason I now have a greater appreciation for Herman Melville as well. My favorite novel of these four is Light in August. I would highly recommend it.

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### **Katherine says**

Sanctuary: These books by Faulkner make me feel like I need to go back to the start as soon as I've finished. The first trip through, I am learning the characters, the surroundings and quirks of the locale. Only when I have taken in the plot can I concentrate on style and meaning.

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### **Brendan says**

This second collection of Faulkner's novels is utterly fantastic, finding the author coming into full grasp of his literary powers. From the perspective shifting brilliance of As I Lay Dying to the stupendous characterization of Pylon, all four of these novels are essential reading.

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## **Mk Miller says**

More a review of Library of America's "packaging." We seem to have a lot of Faulkner, and the one off paper backs and even a big hardback collection by another publisher just look like shit next to this version (not like they're in any kind of order on the shelves). At some point we'll probably throw out the duplicates, but it's Faulkner. Big ups for the built in bookmark - very functional!!! And proceeds go to the NEA.

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## **Erik says**

Great collection of early Faulkner novels. As I Lay Dying and Light in August are deservedly classics, while Sanctuary is well written but pretty average genre fiction and Pylon is one of his weakest efforts.

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## **Toothy\_grin says**

I didn't see a way to indicate just one (or two, or three) of the four novels in this volume. I read "As I Lay Dying" on this checkout, so this appreciation pertains to that title.

Wow! If there's a writer of prose who can produce more poetic language, I would like to know about her/him. Faulkner's words can be dense to the point of difficulty, but when he "nails it," I am at times left shaking my head in admiration. A brief example: "As though the clotting which is you had dissolved into the myriad original motion, and seeing and hearing in themselves blind and deaf; fury in itself quiet with stagnation. Squatting, Dewey Dell's wet dress shapes for the dead eyes of three blind men those mammalian ludicrosities which are the horizons and the valleys of the earth."

I suppose I would take a gentle exception to the reviewer who described this as a funny novel, in that it describes a journey that is fraught with struggle. I am hard-pressed to see how I could describe it as funny without setting myself above the Bundrens somehow, which a story like this makes me ever-less-inclined to do.

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## **K says**

just finished as i lay dying.[july 17,'12] read several years back; reread was even better. just started light in aug. have to intersperse w/others so it'll be a slow go.moving along w light in aug.,mar 10. Finished the other day. What a story teller he was. desvergues was in ox w photo at museum. brief visit w wife but no opportunity to say hello to him. missed opportunity i'm sure i'll regret.

Compelling like no other of his I've read. Of this volume I lack Pylon. Am looking for something to read w pat for our vaca to folly.

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