

William Faulkner Society Calls for Papers ALA 2025

Panel 1: Faulkner and Fascism

The rise of fascism in the 1930s in Europe, which Faulkner read about from across the Atlantic, appears to have encouraged him to reflect on his own work. Daniel Spoth notes that in a 1945 letter to Malcolm Cowley, Faulkner described Percy Grimm, Joe Christmas's frantic murderer in *Light in August* (1932) as "a Fascist galahad who saved the white race by murdering Christmas," before adding, not without humor, that he had "not realized, until after Hitler got into the newspapers that I had created a Nazi before he did" (*The Portable Faulkner* 32). This idea seemed to preoccupy him—indeed, in a series of interviews at the University of Virginia in 1957, Faulkner famously reinforced the idea that Percy could be read as a proto-fascist: "I wrote that book in 1932 before I'd ever heard of Hitler's Storm Troopers, what [Percy Grimm] was was a Nazi Storm Trooper, but then I'd never heard of one then" (*Faulkner in the University* 41). Even more tellingly, Faulkner drew parallels between fascism in Europe and his native South: "I wouldn't say that there are more of him in the South, but I would say that there are probably more of him in the White Citizens Council than anywhere else in the South, but I think you find him everywhere, in all countries, in all people" (*Ibid.*). This idea would be confirmed by Robert H. Brinkmeyer, who notes that in the 1940s, "the American South was crucially tied ideologically to fascist Europe, particularly Nazi Germany" (*The Oxford Handbook of the Literature of the U.S. South* 270). Certainly, Faulkner engaged with the connections between fascism and white supremacy throughout his oeuvre; for example, in *Sanctuary* (1931) with Clarence Snopes's derisive ideas about legalizing against Judaism, which offer another eerie foreboding of Hitler's fascist policies, or in Faulkner's decision to have the librarian discover a photograph of Caddy Compson with a "German staffgeneral" in "Appendix Compson" also written from a 1945 vantage point (334).

The William Faulkner Society thus asks participants to consider how these entanglements between fascism and white supremacy affect how we read, teach, and understand Faulkner, the writer, and his oeuvre. How might we make sense of the resonances between 1930s fascism and notions of white supremacy and their many manifestations today, in both domestic and global contexts?

We invite proposals for 15-20 minute papers. Please submit 200-300 word abstracts and a brief biographical statement to wfsociety@gmail.com by **January 15, 2025**.

The American Literature Association Conference will take place from May 21-24, 2025 at The Westin Copley Place, Boston, MA. Please be aware that the ALA does NOT offer a remote option for presenters or attendees.

Panel 2: Open Call

The William Faulkner Society welcomes proposals exploring any aspect of Faulkner's work. Arguably one of the most influential (and problematic) writers of the twentieth century, Faulkner's work has long encouraged a rich variety of interpretive methods, and we welcome a range of scholarly approaches, including biographical, historical, theoretical, and textual. Comparative approaches to Faulkner's work are welcome.

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