



# William Faulkner: Self-Presentation and Performance (Literary Modernism)

*James G. Watson*

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In his life and writings, William Faulkner continually created and "performed" selves. Even in letters, he often played a part—gentleman dandy, soldier, farmer—while in his fictions these and other personae are counterpoised against one another to create a world of controlled chaos, made in Faulkner's own protean image and reflective of his own multiple sense of self.

In this groundbreaking book, James Watson draws on the entire Faulkner canon, including letters and photographs, to decipher the complicated ways in which Faulkner put himself forth as the artist he felt himself to be through written performances and displays based on the life he actually lived and the ones he imagined living. The topics Watson treats include the overtly performative aspects of *The Sound and the Fury*, self-presentation and performance in private records of Faulkner's life, the ways in which his complicated marriage and his relationships to male mentors underlie his fictions' recurring motifs of marriages and fatherhood, Faulkner's readings of Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau and the problematics of authorial sovereignty, his artist-as-God creation of a fictional cosmos, and the epistolary relationships with women that lie in the correspondence behind *Requiem for a Nun*.

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