

TEACHING FAULKNER



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A Tribute to L. D. Brodsky: Excerpts from *My Life with Faulkner and Brodsky*

Robert W. Hamblin

On a Saturday morning in March 1978, I drove to Farmington, Missouri, a little more than an hour's drive northwest of Cape Girardeau, to meet with Louis Daniel Brodsky. L. D. had instructed me to meet him in the lobby of the Mercantile Bank on the town square. I arrived a little early and took a seat that offered a good view of the front door. I wondered what this Faulkner collector would look like, how old he was, whether I could guess his identity when he entered the bank.

I didn't have to wait long, and I knew it was he as soon as he stepped inside the door. He was of medium height, muscularly built, with alert, friendly eyes and long, curly brown hair. He was casually dressed, wearing slacks and a polo shirt open at the neck, revealing a large gold necklace. His most distinguishable characteristic was a large handlebar moustache, immaculately waxed and curled on each end. He paused just inside the door, scanned the room to find the only stranger there, and walked toward me. Neither of us could know that that first handshake would be the beginning of a thirty-six year collaboration and friendship. Looking back, I now know it was one of the luckiest days of my life.

After a brief exchange of greetings L. D. led me

down a hallway to a conference room where we took seats at a long table. We talked for a while about our mutual interest in Faulkner; then he excused himself and left the room. When he returned he held a large safe-deposit box. He placed it on the table, opened it, reached inside, and lifted an object delicately wrapped in soft, white tissue paper. I was quite impressed when he removed the wrapping and laid the book before me on the table. It was a first edition of *The Sound and the Fury*. L. D. opened the book to the title page, on which I saw, in small, meticulous handwriting, Faulkner's personal signature. I had never seen a first edition of Faulkner's famous novel, much less a signed one, having used only the Modern Library reprint in my reading and research.

For the next two hours I sat at that table as L. D. retrieved box after box of items from the bank vault. There were first editions, with original dust jackets, of Faulkner's novels. There was a copy of Faulkner's first published book, a collection of poems entitled *The Marble Faun*. There were original manuscripts in Faulkner's neat, miniscule hand; other manuscripts typed in Faulkner's two-fingered, error-prone manner; as well

Announcements

As printing costs continue to rise we will move to a digital edition of the newsletter. There will be one more print copy after this issue. So that we can be sure that our subscribers get the newsletter, please send your email address to us at cfs@semo.edu or message us through our Facebook page. We believe this move will allow us to support the teaching and scholarship of Faulkner in more diverse ways. Additionally, the new format will allow for more dynamic use of multimedia tools within the newsletter itself.

The Center for Faulkner Studies at Southeast Missouri State University would like to thank you for the continued support and interest in our publications, conferences, and collections over the years. If you have any questions about this change feel free to email us your concerns or even your suggestions.

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as artwork, letters, photographs, wills, movie contracts, and other biographical documents. Having studied Faulkner for as long as L.D. had been collecting, I was quite familiar with the scholarly work on Faulkner. And I knew that I was looking at a number of artifacts that not even the most informed and celebrated Faulkner scholars had ever seen. It was a heady experience. While a graduate student at Ole Miss, I had heard a visiting speaker, Professor C. Colleer Abbott, describe his discovery of some James Boswell papers in Malahide Castle in Scotland in 1936. The Mercantile Bank in Farmington, Missouri, was certainly no castle, and the Faulkner materials had not been sequestered for more than a century; but I felt I now knew something of the surprise and joy that Professor Abbott had experienced.

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Book collectors are the unsung heroes in literary studies. They acquire, collect, and preserve artifacts that otherwise might have been irretrievably lost. It might be a book, an early draft of a manuscript, a diary or journal, or a letter or other personal document that the collector salvages from the dust bin of history. Whether collectors be private individuals, like L. D. Brodsky, or archivists working for museums or libraries, their work is indispensable to the researchers and critics and, through them, to readers.

All serious Faulkner scholars know the invaluable contributions that collectors have made to Faulkner studies. Linton Massey's private collection became the cornerstone of the University of Virginia's massive Faulkner holdings. James Meriwether helped build the Faulkner collection at the University of Texas. William Wisdom's Faulkner collection is now housed at Tulane, the Wynn family's at the University of Mississippi, and Toby Holtzman's at the University of Michigan. And L. D. Brodsky's collection came to Southeast Missouri State University, becoming the catalyst for the creation of the Center for Faulkner Studies in 1989. William Boozer and Carl Petersen also built significant Faulkner collections; unfortunately, those collections were not acquired intact by an institution and as a result, after the deaths of those collectors, have been scattered among numerous buyers.

Brodsky, Petersen, and Boozer were contemporaries and friendly rivals in their acquisition of Faulkner materials. All three of them frequently attended the annual Faulkner Conference in Oxford. Their rivalry is mirrored in a conversation I overheard

at one of those conferences.

In 1983, in conjunction with that year's conference, the Faulkner plaque that now decorates the wall of the Layayette County courthouse was dedicated and unveiled. Many of us who attended the conference that year, including the three collectors, gathered on the lawn of the courthouse to observe the ceremony. The speaker for the event was Dr. Chester McLarty, Faulkner's personal physician and close friend. When McLarty completed his remarks, one member of the audience turned to another and jokingly remarked, "I wonder which collector will get the manuscript of Dr. McLarty's remarks."

Overhearing the comment, Bill Boozer reached inside his coat pocket, pulled out some typewritten pages, and waved them about, laughing. His friend Chester had already given him an inscribed copy of the speech. Another bystander commented, "What does that leave for Carl and L. D.?"

Someone else said, "Carl plans to come back after dark and take the plaque."

"And Brodsky?"

"He's waiting for Rowan Oak," I said.

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L. D. coined a portmanteau word to describe the work of the collector. That word is "sleuthsayer," a hybrid term combining "sleuth," that is, a detective, with "soothsayer," or prophet. The collector, L. D. says, must, like the detective, uncover and utilize clues to locate artifacts, and he must possess a visionary sense of which author and which artifacts to collect. L. D. was wise to choose an author of such stature as Faulkner to collect, and he became expert at discovering and following clues that enabled him to develop his collection into world-class status.

L. D.'s work as "sleuthsayer" took him to all parts of the United States. In Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, he acquired books, manuscripts, and other items from Myrtle Ramey Demarest, who had been a childhood classmate of Faulkner in Oxford. Among the Demarest materials were ten cartoons that sixteen-year-old Billy Falkner had drawn for his high school yearbook.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, L. D. visited Vance Broach, who, like Faulkner, was a grand-nephew of Mrs. Alabama McLean, "Aunt 'Bama." Broach had inherited a number of Faulkner-related items, including manuscripts of early poems, from Mrs. McLean of Memphis, the last surviving daughter of the "Old Colonel," William C. Falkner.

In Tampa, Florida, L. D. acquired several Faulkner items from James Silver, former history professor at Ole Miss and a close friend of the Faulkners. Included among



these items was one of the most prized items in the Brodsky Collection—a copy of Albert Einstein’s book, *Ideas and Opinions*, personally inscribed by Einstein to Faulkner.

In 1983 L. D. travelled to Los Angeles to acquire some books from A. I. “Buzz” Bezzerides, a novelist and screenwriter with whom Faulkner had worked at Warner Bros. Studio in the early 1940s. Faulkner had boarded in Bezzerides’ home for several weeks. On the last day of his visit, L. D. was given the run of the house and invited to look for other books that Bezzerides, then in his 70s, might have overlooked. In an old desk stored in the basement L. D. found a thick folder identified on the cover as “The De Gaulle Story by William Faulkner.” What he had discovered, as he and I determined later when we prepared the manuscript for publication, was Faulkner’s original version of the unproduced screenplay *The De Gaulle Story*. Unknown to Bezzerides, Faulkner had left it behind when he walked out on Warner Bros. in 1945 and returned to Mississippi.

In 1989 I accompanied L. D. to Ann Arbor, Michigan, to examine the research files that Joseph Blotner compiled in writing his monumental Faulkner biography. L. D., Blotner, and I spent the entire day looking through the boxes and folders, and when the discussion was concluded, L. D. wrote a personal check to Blotner and we loaded the heavy boxes into the back of L. D.’s station wagon.

Since we decided to wait until the next day to drive back to St. Louis, L. D. and I checked into a motel for the night. It had been a long and tiring day, but L. D. was nervous about leaving the boxes in his station wagon overnight, so we moved the materials into the motel room with us. The next morning we had to load the boxes back into the station wagon. Actually, I had to. While I lugged box after box to the station wagon, L. D. sat on the end of the bed watching one of his favorite television shows, *Sesame Street*. Not until Big Bird had done his thing and the show had ended could we begin our drive back home.

Not often, but occasionally, L. D. had to resort to a bit of subterfuge to acquire certain materials. One day I received a call from Hubert McAlexander, a friend and former graduate school classmate who had become a professor of English at the University of Georgia. Did I know, Hubert inquired, that Jimmy Faulkner, the author’s favorite nephew, was shopping around a number of letters that Faulkner had written to his mother? No, I replied, I hadn’t heard. “Well,”

Hubert said, “you might want to contact Jimmy.”

When I called Jimmy to inquire about the letters, his reply was quick and to the point: “I don’t want Brodsky to have the letters.” He didn’t explain why, and I didn’t ask. Rather, I tried another approach.

“Well, you know that Brodsky has transferred ownership of his collection to our university, so he doesn’t own it any more. You’d be dealing with Southeast Missouri State University, not L. D. Brodsky.”

Jimmy was still not persuaded, though he did agree not to sell the letters until he had called me and given us a chance to bid on them. However, time passed and he never called me back.

When it became clear that Jimmy was not going to let either L. D. or Southeast purchase the letters, L. D. contacted a New York book dealer with whom he had done business over the years. L. D. asked the dealer to contact Jimmy Faulkner and arrange to purchase the letters, after which the dealer would then sell the letters to L. D. And that’s what happened.

At the next Faulkner conference I reminded Jimmy that he had never called me back about the letters and asked him if he still had them. “No,” he said, “I sold them to a New York book dealer.” I don’t know if Jimmy ever learned that those letters are now a part of the Brodsky Collection.

And so it went, as item by item, year after year, L. D. expanded his collection. While I sometimes supplied L. D. with information and advice, my role in his collecting was principally to cheer him on from the sidelines and watch him work his magic. The luckiest scholar in America, I had only to sit and wait until he delivered the next treasure to my very door.

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Early in our relationship L. D. and I discovered that we had many things in common besides our love of Faulkner’s writings. One of those was our love of poetry. L. D. was already an established poet when I met him, with several books to his credit and appearances in *Harper’s* and other prominent periodicals. I was a “closet” poet, having written a good number of poems but only a few that I had been brave enough to submit for publication.

It was from L.D. over the years that I learned most of what I know concerning a poet’s temperament and craft. The first lesson, taught by both word and example, had to do with dedication. From his late teens until just weeks before he died, L. D. wrote poetry almost every day—more than 12,000 poems in all. With the possible exception of Marcel Proust or Walt Whitman, L. D. Brodsky very likely has left behind the most complete record of one



individual's existence in all of literature. To do that took immense dedication.

Another important lesson that L. D. taught me was that a book of poems should possess an overall unity of focus, subject, and theme. Each individual poem should be viewed as a "chapter" in the complete work, just as a chapter of a novel contributes to the larger content and effect of the whole. All of L. D.'s poetry volumes are mosaics of individual poems strategically arranged to create a particular effect or develop a central focus or theme.

I wish I could claim a reciprocal influence on L. D.'s poetry, but I cannot. He credited me for the title of one of his books, *The Thorough Earth*; and I fondly recall the day we sat together over cups of coffee at a local restaurant and rearranged the poems for his *Mississippi Vistas*. But in our relationship as poets I was always the student, seldom the teacher. In our Faulkner work we thought of ourselves as equal partners; with the poetry I was ever the disciple.

In 2008 I presented a paper at the annual College English Association's meeting on one of my favorites among L. D.'s books, *You Can't Go Back, Exactly*, a retrospective treatment of his youthful days spent at a summer camp located on Lake Nabagamon in northern Wisconsin. Since the CEA met that year in St. Louis, I invited L. D. to the session in which I presented. In the paper I traced L. D.'s treatment of such themes as the beauty of nature, youthful innocence versus adult awareness, and the redemptive power of memory and art. I concluded by predicting that L. D., if faithful to his typical practice, would return to these poems and probably even write additional poems on the same subject. In the lively discussion that followed my presentation, L. D. contradicted my claim. He had had his say on Nabagamon, he said; there would be no more poems on that topic.

I laughed off his comment. "This is a new experience for me," I told the audience. "William Faulkner has never once quarreled with anything I've said about him."

Last year, just months before his death, L. D. donated his entire poetry archive to Southeast Missouri State University—a fitting complement to his Faulkner collection. Filling some thirty large file cabinets, the archive contains multiple drafts of the 12,000 poems written over his lifetime. Like his Faulkner collection, the poetry archive will be made available to students and scholars for reading, study, and research. Once the collection is opened to the public, I expect to be its first patron.

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When I first met L. D. Brodsky in 1978, I quickly became aware that we came from two vastly different worlds. He was a city boy; I grew up in the country. His father was a wealthy St. Louis businessman; mine was, successively, a Mississippi sharecropper, country store owner, and truck driver. L. D. was a graduate of Country Day, an outstanding private school in St. Louis, and Yale University; I was a graduate of a small-town public school, a community college, and a tiny state college. I was primarily an academic; he was a businessman who was also a poet.

Yet, despite our differences, we almost immediately bonded, initially because of our mutual interest in Faulkner but ultimately because we genuinely liked each other and enjoyed being in one another's company. We were both, as it turned out, "workaholics" (he already was one; I became one), and we fed off each other's energy and enthusiasm. In the process of our shared pursuits we became more than friends—in fact, something more like brothers.

I grew up with two sisters, and while I dearly love both of them, I always regretted not having a brother. But I never had a brother—until William Faulkner gave me one.

Ideally, brothers stick together through thick and thin. They are loyal to one another, and they encourage and support each other's dreams and aspirations. They delight in each other's successes and console one another in their disappointments and failures. They are there for each other, in good times or bad. They laugh together and grieve together. They love one another.

L. D. Brodsky was this kind of brother for me, as I hope I was for him. What a marvelous, richly rewarding journey we traveled together.

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Faulkner in Contemporary Fiction: an Annotated Bibliography

Terrell L. Tebbetts Lyon College

Donald Barthelme

In *William Faulkner's Legacy*: "what shadow, what stain, what mark," Margaret Donovan Bauer comments on the relationship between Barthelme's *The Dead Father* (1975) and *As I Lay Dying*, both novels exploring what Bauer calls the "continued influence of the dead parent upon her/his children" (4).

Juan Benet

In his first novel, *Return to Region* (*Volverás a Región*, 1967, tr. 1985), Spain's Juan Benet created Region, a Yoknapatawpha-like mythical cosmos whose major features he developed at length in an important series of novels: *Return to Region*, *A Meditation* (1970), *A Winter Trip* (1972), *The Mazon's Other House* (1973), and *In the State* (1977). In them Benet details Region's landscapes, with their fauna, flora, rivers and mountains dominated by fear, isolation and ruin.

In particular, *Return to Region* resembles *Absalom, Absalom!* in narrative technique and theme. It features two first-person narratives interspersed with other voices, including a third-person narrator. The first-person narrators are so emotionally isolated their conversation becomes two separate soliloquies in which they cannot hear each other. Their narratives focus on the Civil War and its effects. Both believe that their actions are futile, destined to fail. Underlying their narratives is a Faulknerian sense of ominous fate, decay, degeneration and enigma (Benet's own keyword) transmitted from generation to generation, finally overwhelming the inhabitants of Region who cannot control the designs of history but are doomed to suffer them. In Malcolm Compitello's view, "Juan Benet's *Volverás a Región* represents a watershed in modern peninsular literature, and critics have consistently placed it at the forefront of those narrative texts responsible for changing the direction followed by Spanish fiction and for rearticulating the parameters of fictive discourse treating the Spanish Civil War" (180). See Malcolm A. Compitello, *Ordering the Evidence. Volverás a Región and Civil War Fiction*. Barcelona: Puvill, 1983

Wendell Berry

Berry's work features the small farming community of Port William, KY, and the inter-related families that have farmed the land there over several generations. He tells their stories in novels such as *The Memory of Old Jack* (1974), *A Place on Earth* (revised version, 1983), *A Lost World* (1996), and *Hannah Coulter* (2004) as well as in short story collections like *Watch with Me* (1994) and *That Distant Land* (2004). The community and the families living there are something like the Frenchman Bend section of Yoknapatawpha County, with Berry's Feltners, Catletts, and Coulters akin to Faulkner's Varners, Armstids, Tulls, and Bundrens. Though Berry shares Faulkner's mistrust of modernity, Berry focuses on agrarian cooperation and community, replacing Faulkner's critical eye with an admiring one.

David Bradley

In *The Chaneyville Incident* (1981), John Washington, a young African-American historian married to a white woman, returns to his hometown, Chaneyville, PA, to bury his deceased father's best friend, a man who had served as his own surrogate father. In portraying Washington's determination to uncover the buried racist crimes of the past, the novel becomes a reconsideration of the themes of *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Larry Brown

At the beginning of *Fay* (2000), the title character Fay Jones is walking the highway from southeast Lafayette County toward Oxford, following the same route Lena Grove follows through Yoknapatawpha County toward Jefferson at the beginning of *Light in August*. Rather than becoming an Earth Mother like Lena, however, Fay becomes a *femme fatale*, an attractive naïf whom every man wants to protect and possess but whose presence in their lives becomes a death sentence. Some also see a relationship to *Sanctuary*; Caroline Miles calls Fay "much less" a *femme fatale* "than Temple even though she seduces men . . . and ends up responsible for two people's death" See "Wayward Girls: Teaching Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Larry Brown's *Fay* from a feminist Perspective." *Teaching Faulkner* 31 (fall 2013): 6.



Maryse Condé

In *Crossing the Mangrove* (tr. 1995), multiple narrators tell the story of the late Francis Sancher, who arrived on Guadeloupe as a stranger several years before, took three women as his lovers, harbored unexplained fears for his life, and was finally found dead under mysterious circumstances. Sancher's role will remind readers of Thomas Sutpen's role in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and the multiple narrators who reveal their souls and the souls of the community in telling his tale will remind readers of that novel's narrators as well as those of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As Lay Dying*. As in the latter, the central character's body lies in a casket before the multiple narrators of his and their own lives.

Osamu Dazai

Noboru Yamashita has pointed out that *The Setting Sun* (1947), about a "fallen noble family," features a "mother-sister-brother triangle" that is "much akin to" the "father-sister-brother" triangle of *The Sound and the Fury* (*Teaching Faulkner* 30, Fall 2012: 6).

Clyde Edgerton

As in *As I Lay Dying*, multiple members of a Southern family narrate *The Floatplane Notebooks* (1988), with chapters named for the characters narrating them. As in *Soldiers' Pay* and *Flags in the Dust*, one family member is a veteran home from war (Vietnam) with serious injuries. As in *The Sound and the Fury*, the plot involves incest.

In Memory of Junior (1992) uses the same narrative technique. In addition, the families featured here (the intermarried McCord and Bales clans) are also intermarried with the Copeland family featured in *Floatplane*, thus beginning to constitute the kinds of extended, multi-generational family sagas found throughout Faulkner's fiction.

Tom Franklin and Beth Ann Fennelly

The Tilted World (2013) combines the setting and plot of the two interwoven stories in *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*. As in "Old Man," the setting is 1927 Mississippi just before and during the Great Flood. In both works, the central male character in a small boat rescues the central female character from a tree, takes her downstream looking for a landing, gets supplies from a larger boat heading upstream, and lands at nightfall on

an Indian mound. As in "The Wild Palms," these central characters fall deeply in love despite the fact that the female character is already married, albeit unhappily. Franklin and Fennelly use those connections to open a dialogue with Faulkner on two subjects in particular--stasis and change, past and future.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Chronicle of a Death Foretold (1981) is reminiscent of *Absalom, Absalom!* in at least two ways. In plot, it tells and retells the story of a murder committed several decades earlier. In addition, the narrator deals with contradictory accounts that leave many unanswered questions, including whether the murdered man, Santiago Nasar, had actually violated Angela Vicario, as she had reported. In its theme, then, the novella explores narrative truth-making and questions the boundaries between history and fiction just as *Absalom, Absalom!* does.

Tim Gautreaux

In *William Faulkner's Legacy*: "what shadow, what stain, what mark," Margaret Donovan Bauer sees the short story "The Piano Tuner" in *Welding with Children* as a possible "revision of 'A Rose for Emily'" (186), with a central female character living alone in her father's house and a male character who intervenes in her plight rather than merely reporting it as the narrator does in Faulkner's story.

William Gay

Reviews frequently connect Gay's work with Faulkner's, citing his rich prose style and his dark vision. One novel, in particular, seems to borrow richly from Faulkner. *The Long Home* (1999) features a moonshiner/bootlegger operating on other men's property, like Lee Goodwin in *Sanctuary* and Joe Christmas in *Light in August*. Like Popeye, he murders men who get in his way. Like Flem Snopes he is the son of a sharecropper (219), and like Ab Snopes he is a barn burner (48-54). He runs an illicit roadhouse frequented by whores and drunks. Pitted against him is teenager Nathan Winer, who is just becoming a man. In his impressive maturity he is reminiscent of Ike McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses* and Bayard Sartoris in *The Unvanquished*.



Gail Godwin

In *A Southern Family* (1987) Godwin has dismantled *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* and has constructed a new novel out of their still-recognizable timbers and planks. Her dysfunctional Quick family, their name borrowed from a minor family in Faulkner's fiction, relates to Faulkner's Compsons. Mother and father are estranged, and the eldest son commits suicide. The only daughter, Clare rather than Candace, has escaped to the North and become a novelist. A marriage to an uneducated mountain family brings a host of Bundrens (named Mullins) into the Compsons'/Quicks' town world. In both cases, the family "has molded them, ensnared them" (356), and if "guns don't kill you families will." In addition to these characters and themes, the narrative style seems Faulknerian: a limited third-person narrator follows one character after another, giving each character's impressions of the "Quick murk," while one chapter gives a character a first-person narrative, and another takes the form of a letter to the brother who has killed himself.

Kent Haruf

Haruf has stated his high admiration for Faulkner's fiction and has acknowledged a relationship between the old bachelor brothers of *Plainsong* (1999) and *Eventide* (2004), the McPhersons, and Faulkner's similar characters, Buck and Buddy McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses*, as well as between both writers' portraits of tough, knowing, and sometimes compassionate lawmen. In general, Haruf observes that he tries, like Faulkner, never to condescend to even the most humble of his characters.

In his most recent novel, *Benediction* (2013), Haruf adds a new Faulkner-related character, the Rev. Rob Lyle, who, like the Rev. Gail Hightower of *Light in August*, finds his small-town ministry threatened by overtones of homosexuality and is abandoned by his wife, while the final straw, in the town's view, is not a Hightower-like glorification of war but an opposition to war in the Middle East. Like Hightower, Lyle leaves the ministry.

Kaui Hart Hemmings

Because of its focus on a dying mother who has had an affair, the mother's dysfunctional family, and the trip her survivors undertake, some reviewers have tied *The Descendants* (2007) to *As I Lay Dying*.

Edward P. Jones

Jones reimagines parts of *Absalom, Absalom!* in *The Known World* (2003). A black man, Henry Townsend, replaces the white Thomas Sutpen as a central character who rises from nothing to become the owner of a plantation and a number of slaves. After beginning life in circumstances even more humble than Sutpen, as a slave himself, Townsend is bought and freed by his father Augustus, who had likewise bought his own and his wife's freedom. In then becoming a slave owner himself, much to his father's disappointment, Townsend duplicates the kind of rise that saw Sutpen, once the "boy at the door," turn his own son away from the door of his own house. Like Sutpen, Townsend builds his plantation house himself, aided by a slave, whom he is said to "wrestle around with" (123), and once it is finished he sets out to find a wife, a task "near the end of a list of things he planned to do with his life" (5).

Jones's novel has a historical sweep like *Absalom, Absalom!*'s, and, though it has an omniscient narrator, it still duplicates *Absalom, Absalom!*'s use of unreliable narrators by having its characters sometimes tell parts of the Townsend story to others, altering it to suit their own purposes. One, the slave Moses, gives "imaginative" accounts of the building of the Townsend plantation house and purposefully "create[s] the history of his master" (273) in order to woo his widow. Another, the free black Fern Elston, withholds elements of the Townsend story as she tells it to a white writer.

Dave King

In *The Ha-Ha* (2005) King creates a non-verbal narrator with a brain injury (Howie Kapostash) who, like Faulkner's Benjy Compson, is unable to read, write, or speak. Also like Benjy, Howie loses control occasionally and then is heard "bellow[ing] and screech[ing]" (90), sometimes in the back yard of the old family home where he lives. Howie gets sent to Jackson, as it were, when he enters a mental facility. King gives him a young black boy (Ryan) to look after, as the young Luster looks after Benjy. Ryan plays youth baseball on a team named Luster Kleen. King places a woman from another race (Laurel, a Vietnamese-American) in the kitchen cooking, as the African American woman Dilsey does in the Compson household.

While King has asserted that he "was not trying to re-imagine *The Sound and the Fury*," he has nevertheless created a narrator and cast of characters



strikingly resonant of those in *The Sound and the Fury* and through them has reversed that novel's dynamics. Unlike the dysfunctional Compson family, King's "nontraditional household" (197) sees beyond differences of ability, race, and sex as it struggles to become a harmonious whole, "like a brotherhood" (197), and as Howie and Ryan begin growing beyond the traumas and dysfunctions that have marked parts of their lives.

Bret Lott

In his short story "Rose" (*Shenandoah* 50.2, Summer 2000; *The Difference Between Women and Men*, 2005: 77-97), Lott tells the further story of Miss Emily Grierson, most of it in the form of Miss Emily's interior monologue, which contrasts, of course, with Faulkner's narration by a community member. Emily sees Homer Barron as a figure of her father and reveals a surprising secret, one consistent with her Southern Gothic portrayal in Faulkner's story.

In *Ancient Highway* (2008), Lott's Holmes family in some ways re-imagines two of Faulkner's dysfunctional families, finding a gleam of hope where Faulkner finds only darkness. Patriarch Earl Holmes in Lott's novel, like patriarch Anse Bundren in *As I Lay Dying*, is a liar, but unlike Anse, Earl admits his propensity, and his admission becomes a source of hope. Matriarch Saralee Holmes is dying in her novel as Addie dies in hers. Both women distance themselves from their families, rejecting husband and offspring. Both become the (mainly) silent centers of their families. But Saralee moves back toward her family while Addie never does, adding to the novel's hopeful tone. As the children of dysfunctional families, Dewey Dell and Joan both reject their own children, Dewey Dell in seeking an abortion and Joan in withdrawing so completely from her son Brad's life that he feels utterly alone even as they live together. But Brad and Joan can and do begin building a relationship, completing the novel's hopeful conclusion. As Faulkner does in *The Sound and the Fury*, Lott narrates this family's story combining third-person and first-person points of view.

Alberto Manguel

James Hatch, writing in the *Toronto Review of Books*, has compared *All Men Are Liars* (2012) to "William Faulkner's four ways of looking at the Compsons," the latter, of course, referring to *The Sound and the Fury*, a

novel Manguel includes in his must-read list. With five narrators giving varying and conflicting versions of the life, work, and death of a great man, the novel might also remind readers of four ways of dissecting Thomas Sutpen and thus of *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Bobbie Ann Mason

In *A Web of Words: The Great Dialogue of Southern Literature* (U of Georgia P, 2007), critic Richard Gray compares Mason's protagonist Samantha (Sam) Hughes from *In Country* (1985) to Quentin Compson, specifically in the way that both see the past "constantly exploding into the present" (46), repeatedly entering "consciousness through the senses, physical sensations, just as it does in *The Sound and the Fury* or *Absalom, Absalom!*" (47). Even more, Gray compares Sam to Ike McCaslin, as Sam "takes her path into the past by poring over the written record of her predecessors and by making an errand into the wilderness" as Ike does in *Go Down, Moses* (48).

Cormac McCarthy

Many readers and critics have commented on McCarthy's general relationship with Faulkner, noting the rich language, brooding tone, and sometimes gothic characters and situations common to both, especially in McCarthy's early Appalachian novels. McCarthy's 2005 *No Country for Old Men* has a more specific relationship to Faulkner. To a considerable degree it updates Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. Both novels feature an ineffectual man of law as the protagonist (lawyer Benbow, Sheriff Bell), a ruthless antagonist in the drug trade (Popeye in Mississippi bootleg, Chigurh in Mexican heroin—note the similarly unusual names), and a hapless victim (Lee Goodwin and Llewelyn Moss, both army veterans). Both picture the illicit drug trades as symptomatic of the general corruption of society as a whole, licit as well as illicit. See Terrell Tebbets, "Sanctuary Redux: Faulkner's Logical Pattern of Evil in McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*." *Philological Review* 32.1 (Spring 2006): 69-81.

Robert Rudnicki has explored the intertextual conversation between *Suttree* (1979) and *Blood Meridian* (1984) and *A Fable*, focusing on how the three novels use images of edifices as metaphors for human truths and the various social systems related to them and exploring how such images open up a dialogue between foundational and anti-foundational points of view. See "Turtles All the Way Down: Foundation, Edifice, and



Ruin in Faulkner and McCarthy.” *The Faulkner Journal* 25.1(Spring 2010): 23-52.

Jill McCorkle

Life After Life (2013) is loosely structured after *As I Lay Dying*. Chapters are headed by the names of the characters the 3rd-person narrator focuses on, each reappearing repeatedly through the novel. One character (Sadie rather than Addie) lies dying. Dysfunctional families abound.

Larry McMurtry

In *William Faulkner's Legacy: "what shadow, what stain, what mark,"* Margaret Donovan Bauer has explored the implications of the “intertext” between McMurtry’s *Lonesome Dove* (1985) and *As I Lay Dying*, focusing on the “similarly arduous and humiliating journey[s]” undertaken to get a body buried in a distant site, both journeys tinged with “an element of revenge” (36ff).

Mo Yan

Sometimes called “China’s Faulkner,” Mo Yan (pen name of Guan Moye) has credited Faulkner, particularly *The Sound and the Fury*, with showing him that he could use his own hometown and his own family and friends as the basis for his fictional setting and characters. He sets his family saga *Red Sorghum* (trans. 1993) in his home province during the mid-twentieth century. See Thomas Inge, “Mo Yan and William Faulkner: Influences and Confluences.” *The Faulkner Journal* 6.1 (Fall 1990): 15-24.

Toni Morrison

The father figures in *Song of Solomon* (1977) and *Absalom, Absalom!* have interested critic Philip Weinstein. See his “David and Solomon: Fathering in Faulkner and Morrison” in *Unflinching Gaze: Morrison and Faulkner Re-Envisioned*: 48-74. In *William Faulkner's Legacy: "what shadow, what stain, what mark,"* Margaret Donovan Bauer explores Thomas Sutpen’s relationship to Morrison’s Macon Dead II, Quentin’s relationship to Milkman Dead, and Pilate and Ruth Dead’s relationships to Rosa Coldfield. Bauer speculates that *Song of Solomon* is a “conscious re-vision of *Absalom, Absalom!*” (7).

In its treatment of African American masculinity, *Beloved* (1987) has some relationship with *Go Down*,

Moses. See Philip Weinstein’s “Mister: The Drama of Black Manhood in Faulkner and Morrison” in *Faulkner and Gender*: 273-296. Also see Weinstein’s treatment of *Beloved* and *Light in August* in his *What Else but Love? The Ordeal of Race in Faulkner and Morrison*. In this piece, Weinstein focuses on the difference between the white male Southerner’s and the black female Midwesterner’s treatments of identity.

Morrison’s *Jazz* (1992) searches the past in order to understand a senseless murder—a past in which miscegenation has produced a pass-for-white mixed-race son named Golden Grey who seeks out his absent African American father. Morrison thus revisits the plot and some of the themes of *Absalom, Absalom!*. See the chapter on *Jazz* in Weinstein’s *What Else but Love*.

In a recent article Jennie Joiner has explored how the Beauchamps’ hearth in *Go Down*, *Moses* and the community’s oven in *Paradise* (1998) work similarly to open consideration of how “black men establish their masculinity” (53). She argues that both novels suggest a transformation into “domestic masculinity” (54), with Deek Morgan achieving a “reconstitution of the self” and thus of masculinity (66). See “The Slow Burn of Masculinity in Faulkner’s Hearth and Morrison’s Oven.” *The Faulkner Journal* 25.2 (Spring 2010): 53-68.

Haruki Murakami

In both “Naya wo Yaku” (1983) [or “Barn Burning” in English] and *Dance, Dance, Dance* (1988), Murakami refers explicitly to Faulkner. In the 1983 short story, the protagonist reads the Faulkner story. In his novel the protagonist reads *The Sound and the Fury*. In the essay “Postmodern Views of Two Japanese Writers on Faulkner: Haruki Murakami and Kenji Nakagami” (*Teaching Faulkner* 24: fall 2006), Takako Tanaka suggests that the narrators’ loss of their girlfriends in those two works relates to Quentin and Benjy Compson’s loss of Caddy, leading each narrator to “a threatening foreboding that his existence is as ephemeral as his girlfriend’s” (10).

In a recent article (*Teaching Faulkner* 30: fall 2012), Noboru Yamashita argues that in *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1985) “Murakami adopted Faulkner’s point-counterpoint method” of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* and “upgrades Faulkner’s narrative techniques to fit postmodern demands” by making the counterpointed plots “cyclic” (6).



Kenji Nakagami

According to Takako Tanaka in “Postmodern Views of Two Japanese Writers on Faulkner: Haruki Murakami and Kenji Nakagami” (*Teaching Faulkner* 24 [fall 2006]), “Nakagami’s ‘Roji,’ or ‘Alley’ community . . . is tightly knit with kinship” and “serves as the core of [Nakagami’s] literary imagination, just like Faulkner’s Jefferson does” (9). Tanaka adds that one of Nakagami’s recurring characters, Akiyuki, has a “love-hate relationship” with his rich, powerful father who deserted him and his mother in his childhood, “strongly remind[ing] one of Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*” (9).

Lewis Nordan

The short story collection *The All-Girl Football Team* (1986) contains a Faulkner parody titled “The Farmer’s Daughter.” In quasi-Faulknerian language, it tells the story of the title character, Dixie Dawn, who feels as if she is “living on the periphery of a bowdlerized Faulkner novel” (67) as she reads of Ike Snopes’ affair with the cow in *The Hamlet*. A decaying plantation house as setting and a bizarre cast of past-haunted characters complete the parody.

The short story collection *Sugar Among the Freaks* (1996) includes a few explicit references to Faulkner’s *oeuvre*. The central character in “One-Man Band” is a 40-something single man living with his parents and preaching at a local church. His name, ironically enough, is Jewel. Two other stories use the name of an actual Faulkner preacher, Hightower. In “The All-Girl Football Team” the team’s center is Tootie Nell Hightower, and in “Sugar, the Eunuchs, and Big G.B.” a “little Episcopal chapel” was built by a “Dr. Hightower” (242). Another reference also nods toward *Light in August*. In the title story, “Sugar Among the Freaks,” the narrator Sugar Mecklin imagines that a character would probably “be assistant manager of the planing mill” before later recanting as he acknowledges that “maybe there are no planing mills in Oklahoma” (276, 280). The frequent appearance of “freaks” in these stories, of course, plays on the common observation that Faulkner and other Southern writers tend to create such characters.

One story in the collection, “Sugar, the Eunuchs, and Big G.B.,” deals with the anxiety of influence as the central character Sugar fires two shots at his father, a “magic” man and an accomplished drinker of whiskey whom the narrator both hates and loves. He hates him so much he fires those shots and seeks a surrogate father in Big G.B., a gun-loving hunter who might suggest

Hemingway. Yet he loves his magic father so much he imitates him and wants to be him.

Faulkner gets a mention in *The Sharpshooter Blues* (1997), a novel set in colorful Arrow Catcher, Mississippi. When one of the children worries that he looks like a “geek,” his father advises him, “I’ll read you some Faulkner sometime. . . . Geeks, midgets, anything you heart desires. Better than comic books” (249). Within the Faulkner canon, this novel may relate most closely to *The Sound and the Fury*. The character “Hydro” Raney, a young man with a disability, suggests Benjy Compson, while a brother-sister pair of outlaws (“lovely children”) may play out one terrible version of Quentin and Caddy, and another pair, the McNaughton children (Louis & Katy—Caddy?), may play out an alternate version. Three additional characters strengthen the resonance with *The Sound and the Fury*. As an African American woman who raises a white child, Aunt Lily suggests Dilsey, though she is utterly unlike Dilsey in personality. That child, the sharpshooter of the title, was parented and abandoned by carnival workers (Miss Quentin and the man with the red tie?).

Finally, Preacher Roe, who delivers a sermon on the resurrection, reminds Faulkner readers of the Rev. Shegog and his Easter sermon. Though these resonant characters have personalities widely different from those of their Faulkner ancestors, and though the plot is wholly dissimilar from Faulkner’s, in part the novel turns the Faulkner tragedy into contemporary tragicomedy. The McNaughton children’s emotionally absent parents (one an alcoholic) end the novel apparently overcoming their dysfunctions and reconnecting with their children, and Hydro’s funeral seems to redeem killer and victim alike. See Terrell Tebbetts, “Faulkner’s Ghost in Lewis Nordan’s *The Sharpshooter Blues*” in *Lewis Nordan: Humor, Heartbreak, and Hope*: 83-103.

Kenzaburo Oe

This Japanese novelist, winner of the 1994 Nobel Prize for Literature, has acknowledged Faulkner as one of his influences. Several of his works—*A Personal Matter* (1969) and *Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness* (1977)—treat father-son relationships. The protagonists attempt to come to terms with absent fathers and/or with an “idiot” son, who, like Benjy Compson, has been called the moral center of Oe’s works. In addition, Oe’s translator John Nathan has hinted at a Faulknerian model for Oe’s repeated setting, a “mythical mountain village” that Nathan has termed “Oe’s Yoknapatawpha” See Nathan’s Introduction to Oe’s *Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness*



(1977): xx.

Amos Oz

Kathaleen Amende has explored the shared settings and themes in Oz's "Nomad and Viper" and Faulkner's "Dry September." Amende argues that Faulkner's Minnie and Oz's Geula create rape fantasies after failing in their culturally assigned gender roles and thus becoming "Other," their fantasies "focusing attention on their superiority to a *different* Other" (16). See "'A man with such an appearance was capable of anything': Imaginary Rape and the Violent 'Other' in Faulkner's 'Dry September' and Oz's 'Nomad and Viper.'" *The Faulkner Journal* 25.2 (Spring 2010): 9-22.

Suzan-Lori Parks

In *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), Parks, a Pulitzer-winning playwright, re-imagines *As I Lay Dying* from an African American woman's point of view. In Parks' novel, the Beede family and various friends from their all-black hamlet in Texas narrate the chapters (which are named for the narrators) as they set out on a trip not to bury Mother but to dig her up. Chief narrator is Billy Beede, only daughter (and only child) of the deceased Willa Mae. She is pregnant with an illegitimate child (fathered by a man named Snipes) and wants the jewels Mother was buried with in order to pay for an abortion. See Tebbetts, Terrell, "Treasure in the Ground: *Getting Mother's Body's* Dialogue with *As I Lay Dying*." *Teaching Faulkner* 29 (Fall 2011): 1-7.

Jayne Anne Phillips

Lark & Termite (2009) seems to be in conversation with *The Sound and the Fury*, for its structure, narration, and, to some extent, its characters and theme spin out of Faulkner. Each of its four sections is headed by a date—July 26, 27, 28, & 31—and the events unfold through four narrators—the 1st-person narratives of Noreen & Lark and the limited 3rd-person narratives relating Leavitt's and Termite's experiences, perceptions, and feelings. Like Benjy, Termite has a profound disability that renders him unable to speak, and, like the young Caddy, his sister Lark loves and cares for him. Like the later Caddy, the mother of Lark and Caddy, an absent woman named Lola, has sent her children back home to be cared for by a sibling. In an NPR interview, Phillips has acknowledged her love of *The Sound and the Fury* but has pointed out that, unlike Benjy, Termite "has almost a prescient,

perfective conscious" and that, though like the Compsons, the family "would definitely be labeled dysfunctional by social scientists of our time . . . they're not dysfunctional; they are very functional." See Terrell Tebbetts, "Phillips' Termite and Faulkner's Benjy: What Disability?" Forthcoming in *Fifty Years after Faulkner*. U of Mississippi P.

Ron Rash

In *The World Made Straight* (2006), Rash's 17-year-old Travis Shelton needs to broaden his vision of himself, of others, and of the past. He comes under the tutelage of Leonard Shuler, a failed college history teacher, whose library and whose knowledge and wisdom expand Travis's sense of himself and the world. Shuler has in his possession Civil War ledgers kept by his great-great-grandfather and passed on to him by his grandfather. Passages from the ledgers, which are interspersed through the novel, haunt Shuler as he wrestles with his forebear's presence at a massacre of unarmed men including a number of young Travis's forebears. The role of old ledgers, their record of forebears' guilt, and the need to atone in the present place the novel in conversation with *Go Down, Moses*. The more general way that the past impinges on the present links the novel to *Absalom, Absalom!*, a linkage Rash himself mentioned in a presentation at Lyon College in 2010.

Lee Smith

In *William Faulkner's Legacy*: "what shadow, what stain, what mark," Margaret Donovan Bauer connects Richard Burlage of *Oral History* (1983) to Faulkner's Quentin Compson, both "would-be knights" who more fully oppress women than rescue them (8), and Almarine Cantrell, the patriarch of Hoot Owl Holler, to Thomas Sutpen, both abandoning mate and unborn child "to seek more suitable wife" (137), thus bringing a curse upon the family. She sees Smith moving away from the curse, however, through women who empower themselves.

In *Family Linen* (1985) a mother, Elizabeth Hess, lies dying as her five adult children gather at her bedside. Those children and Elizabeth's sisters Nettie and Fay narrate the story of her life and theirs in alternating chapters that bear their narrators' names as titles. After her death, Elizabeth, like Addie, narrates her own chapter—by means of a journal found by one of her daughters. The Hess children lead various kinds of dysfunctional lives filled with sexual phobia, infidelity, and estrangement. In a reversal of *As I Lay Dying*, the



obvious model, Smith drives the plot not toward the interment of a disruptive mother but toward the disinterment of a disruptive father, that event leading to a genuine rather than ironic restoration of order. See Terrell Tebbets, "Disinterring Daddy: *Family Linen's* Reply to *As I Lay Dying*" in *Southern Literary Journal* 37.3 (Spring 2006): 97-112.

Smith returns to *As I Lay Dying* in *The Last Girls* (2002), using alternating narrators to tell the story of their deceased friend as they journey toward her "burial"—the dispersing of her ashes in the Mississippi River at New Orleans. Like Addie Bundren, the deceased speaks in this novel, through a series of poems she wrote before her death. Though its use of *As I Lay Dying's* plot and narration and even its title resemble Graham Swift's *Last Orders*, Smith said in a recent interview that she had not read Swift's novel when she wrote hers.

Graham Swift

In *Waterland* (1983) Swift, an open admirer of Faulkner, writes a family saga similar to *Absalom, Absalom!*. It features a great founder's rise to prominence, a murder, a descendant who is a near-idiot, and many questions about historiography and story telling. The postmodern narrator, a history teacher, is entirely uncertain that words can ever get at the truth even though it is truth that he feels driven toward.

Last Orders (1996) overtly follows the plot and narrative technique of *As I Lay Dying*. It is a funeral journey to dispose of the ashes of the deceased Jack Dodds, stepfather and pub mate of the four travelers, who narrate chapters bearing their names as titles. Like Addie Bundren, Jack Dodds narrates one chapter himself. Three of the four central families—those of travelers Vince Dodds, Lenny Tate, and Ray Johnson—have experienced various dysfunctions that gradually come to light through the journey, including infidelity, divorce, and parent-child estrangements. Darl Bundren's concern with identity becomes a central concern in Swift's novel as characters confront death in a post-Christian world. See Terrell Tebbets, "Discourse and Identity in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Swift's *Last Orders*." *The Faulkner Journal* 25.2 (Spring 2010): 69-88.

Jesmyn Ward

In her National Book Award winner *Salvage the Bones* (2011), West has the narrator refer to an school essay she wrote on *As I Lay Dying*. Thus West signals

even more directly than in her interview references to Faulkner's novel that this work responds to Faulkner's. In it, she creates a dirt-poor, Bundren-like African American family of three sons and a daughter whose mother is dead and whose father is shiftless; she subjects them to a devastating flood (brought by Hurricane Katrina rather than the Yoknapatawpha River), matches one brother's (Skeetah's) special relationship with his pit bull to Jewel's relationship with his horse, and makes the daughter (Esch) her central character. Like Dewey Dell, Esch is pregnant and rejected by her lover. With Esch not only the central character but also the sole narrator, *Salvage the Bones* becomes not only a black but also a feminist response to *As I Lay Dying*, one notable aspect of which is that the Batiste family, for all its shortcomings and trials, is more functional than dysfunctional.

James Wilcox

Wilcox has followed Faulkner in creating his own postage stamp of a universe for continued setting and characters. He ties his setting to Faulkner's in naming it Tula Springs, apparently borrowing the name from the Tula, Mississippi, the hamlet located in southeast Lafayette County approximately where Frenchman's Bend is located in Faulkner's maps of Yoknapatawpha County. From *Modern Baptists* (1983) to *Hunk City* (2007), Wilcox creates quirky characters for his novels, which take his own comic rather than Faulkner's tragic view of human life.



Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for the Center for Faulkner Studies 2014 Conference: Faulkner and Hurston. By and large, the entire conference was a huge success. The conference was well populated by both the community at large and the student community. The presentations, ranging from that of undergraduates up through the work of established visiting professors, were engaging and informative and the events we were able to put on drew in a crowd!

One of the most notable events was the Chautauqua performance, in “William Faulkner” himself appeared—performed by John Dennis Anderson who presented and fielded audience questions in the character of William Faulkner. By our estimates, at least 60 percent of the audience was made up of community members who had heard about the performance from the newspaper or radio. Another event we were able to put on was a photo gallery series called “Native Ground: Landscapes of Southern Writers.” Held at Crisp Museum, this artistic look at the homes and significant places in the lives of Southern writers drew in a crowd made up of both community members and interested scholars.

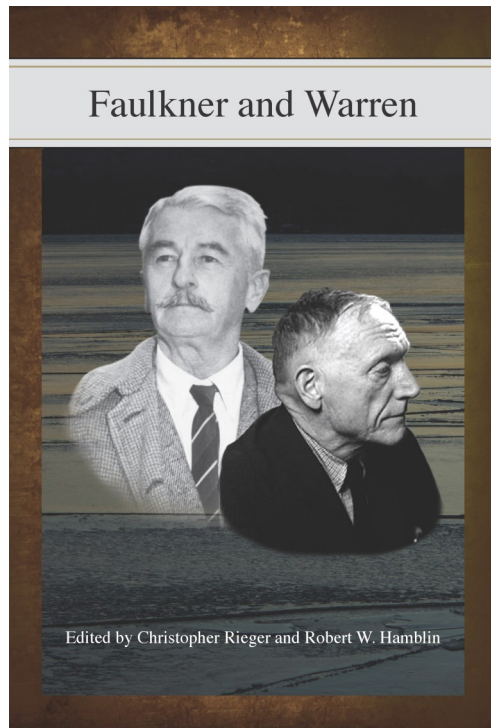
One anonymous scholar wrote, “Another excellent conference! You do such a wonderful job

of putting together an event that is at once intimate and collegial and which boasts outstanding scholarship as well as opportunities for students, the scholars of tomorrow, an opportunity to cut their teeth.” The response to the entire conference was positive, and we look forward to seeing old and new faces at the next conference in 2016!



John Dennis Anderson performed as William Faulkner at the 2014 conference.





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