

Faulkner Newsletter and Yoknapatawpha Review

Volume 15
Number 2 *Vol. 15, No. 2 (1995)*

Article 1

4-1-1995

Vol. 15, No. 2 (1995)

William Boozer

W. Kenneth Holditch

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/faulkner_nl



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Boozer, William and Holditch, W. Kenneth (1995) "Vol. 15, No. 2 (1995)," *Faulkner Newsletter and Yoknapatawpha Review*: Vol. 15 : No. 2 , Article 1.

Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/faulkner_nl/vol15/iss2/1

This Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the General Special Collections at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faulkner Newsletter and Yoknapatawpha Review by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER

& Yoknapatawpha Review

Vol. XV, No. 2

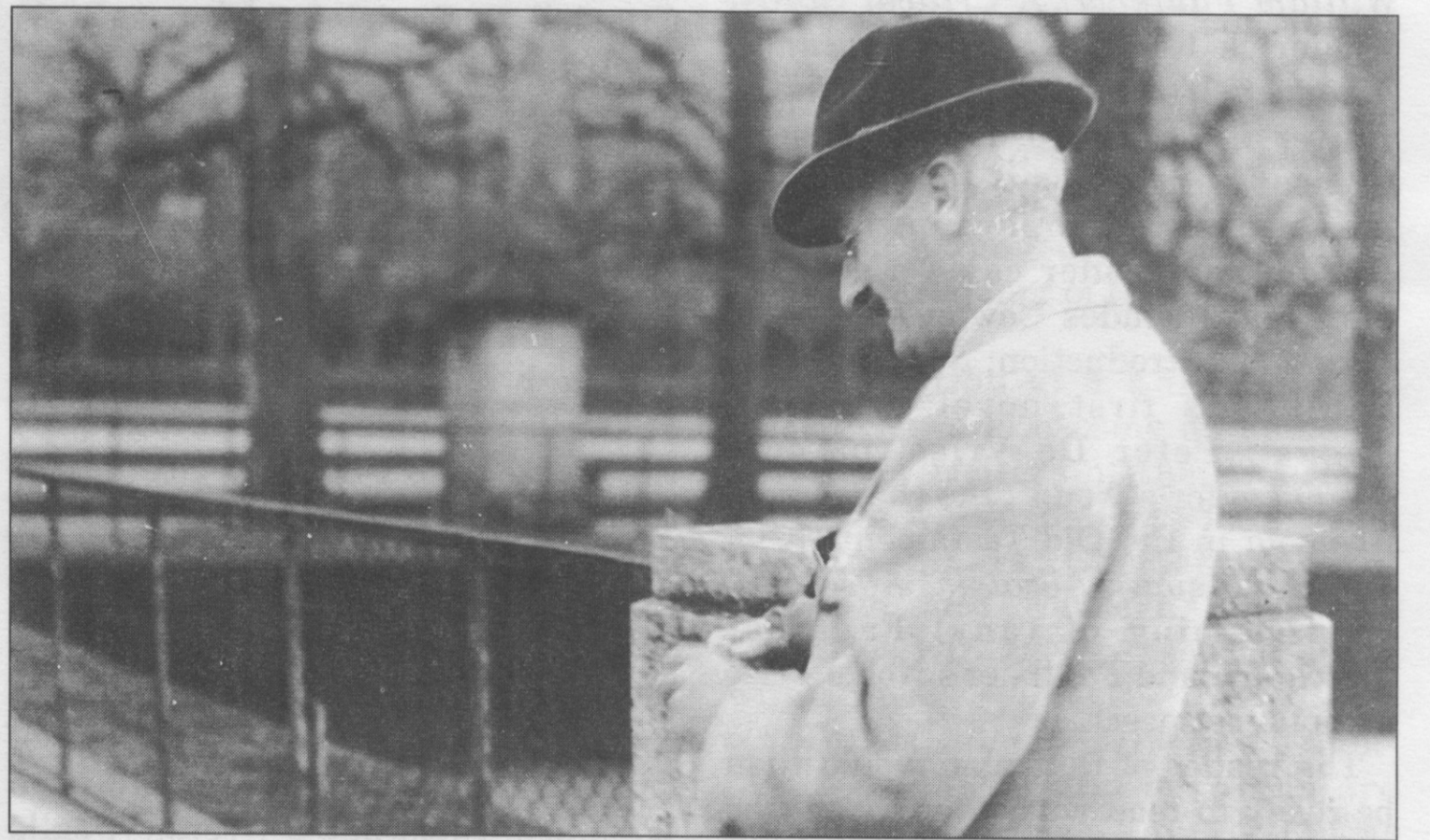
April-June 1995

An American and Friends in Paris



PHOTOGRAPHS OF FAULKNER IN PARIS in April 1951 picture him with Renée Gallimard (above) of Éditions Gallimard, Faulkner's French publisher, and at Saint-Cloud (left) with Else Jonsson. Jonsson, the widow of Thorsten Jonsson, a Stockholm journalist who was among the first to translate Faulkner into Swedish, was an employee of the house of Bonniers, Faulkner's Swedish publisher. The photos were presented to the new William Faulkner Foundation at Rennes 2 University in France by Monique Lange, who as press attache at Éditions Gallimard was among those assigned to help entertain Faulkner on his visit. Faulkner was god-father to the daughter of Monique and Jean-Jacques Salomon.

(Photos courtesy Monique Lange)



A Checklist

MissQ, "Reading" Series Head List

Mississippi Quarterly. Special William Faulkner Issue, Vol. XLVII, No. 3 (Summer 1994). Donald M. Kartiganer, guest editor. Contents include essays and essay-reviews by Michael Williams, Renée R. Curry, Robert Merrill, Diana York Blaine, Andrew J. Wilson, Nancy E. Batty, Richard Golden, James M. Mellard and Anne Goodwyn Jones, and a David Minter review of Jay Watson's *Forensic Fiction: The Lawyer Figure* in

(Continued Page 2)

How, What to Read First in Faulkner Gets Some Answers

The one question heard more than any other, from readers who know of our admiration for William Faulkner, is which of his books to read first.

A variant of that question is "how" to read and make sense of the man.

The newest such inquiry is from Nashville's Ray Dickerson, whose recent attempt at reading *Absalom, Absalom!* has ended in early bewilderment and a closed book.

Many critics and scholars, the late Cleanth Brooks among them, have

(Continued Page 2)

New Faulkner Foundation Is Launched At Rennes 2

By WILLIAM BOOZER

Important new focus on Faulkner studies and the literature of the American South, including plans for research, publications and symposia that will have global interest and participation, is underway at Rennes 2 University in France with organization of a new William Faulkner Foundation.

The inaugural event under Foundation sponsorship was a William Faulkner Festival last fall at the University's Villejean campus which drew attendance and presenters from

a number of countries.

Planning by Foundation leadership is already looking ahead to the William Faulkner Centenary in 1997 with fulfillment of the wish by Faulkner for publication of a four-color bilingual edition of *The Sound and the Fury*, which will be illustrated by André Juillard.

Highlights of last fall's inaugural Festival included a "William Faulkner & Europe" symposium presided over by Michel Gresset; videoconferences

(Continued Page 3)

How, What To Read First in Faulkner

(From Page 1)

called *Absalom* Faulkner's greatest single work. Some put *The Sound and the Fury* on top. Each is a masterpiece. Each is a difficult read. And neither one is where a reader coming to Faulkner for the first time wants to begin.

Michael Dirda in his "Readings" column in the *Washington Post Book World* recently passed along a plea for help from a reader asking advice on how to "appreciate" the work of Faulkner, especially *Absalom*. Some responses were reported in a followup column.

M. Thomas Inge, Blackwell Professor of the Humanities at Randolph-Macon College, suggested that would-be readers of Faulkner start with some of the less complex works, such as *The Unvanquished*, *Flags in the Dust*, or *Light in August*. Inge went on to recommend Brooks' chapter on *Absalom* in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* and, for an overview of Faulkner's career, David Minter's *William Faulkner: His Life and Work*.

Other suggestions from Dirda's readers included Edmond Volpe's *Reader's Guide to William Faulkner*, the Viking *Portable Faulkner* and Malcolm Cowley's Introduction, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962*, Irving Howe's *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, Frederick Karl's *William Faulkner: American Writer*, and *Faulkner in the University*, the record of Faulkner's sessions with students and others at the University of Virginia in 1957-58.

From one reader came a reading plan that includes Cowley's *Portable Faulkner* Introduction; *Soldiers' Pay*, Faulkner's first novel; *Light in August*; Peter De Vries' parody, "Requiem for a Noun"; the chapters on *Absalom* in the Old Testament (King James version); *Absalom, Absalom!*; the scanning of (any) Faulkner biography; and Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

The reader of that plan would then be ready to read what the reader who offered the plan deems to be Faulkner's greatest work, "The Bear."

Our own initial reading of Faulkner 30 years ago came after two false starts, when we made the mistake of trying to read, first, *The Sound and the Fury*, and later, *Absalom, Absalom!*

We then decided that the only way for us to take on Mr. Faulkner was to line up the books in the order they were published, start at the beginning, and go to the end—all 19 novels, six volumes of collected stories, and two of poetry. Helping guide us along the way was *Crowell's Handbook of Faulkner*, by Dorothy Tuck.

We now know it would be better to begin with the short stories, then go on to the first of 15 novels set in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County,

Checklist

(From Page 1)

Faulkner. *MissQ* is published by Mississippi State University, Box 5272, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

Ruppersburg, Hugh M. *Reading Faulkner: Light in August*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. Ruppersburg, head of the English Department at the University of Georgia, provides glossary and commentary on this first title in a new series programmed by UPM. Noel Polk, general editor of the series, provides a Preface and Ruppersburg the Introduction. The idea for the series came from the late James Hinkle of San Diego State University. Polk notes that it was Hinkle "who established its principles, selected the authors, worked long hours with each of us in various stages of planning and preparation, and then died [in December 1990] before seeing any of the volumes in print." The series, Polk adds, "derives from Jim's hardcore commitment to the principle that readers must understand each word in Faulkner's difficult novels at its most basic, literal, level before hoping to understand the works' larger issues." Annotations are keyed by page and line number to the Library of America text of *Light in August*, edited by Joseph Blotner and Noel Polk (*William Faulkner Novels: 1930-1935*). xiv + 324 pp. \$45 cloth; \$17.50 soft-cover.

Teaching Faulkner, No. 6 (Fall 1994). Robert W. Hamblin, editor; Charles A. Peek, associate editor. Contributing to this issue are Caroline Carvill of Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology with "Narrative Complexity, Voice, and Paper Assignments," and Pamela Himdman Hearn of Southeast Missouri State University, "Teaching Faulkner: Meaning Through Metaphor." *Teaching Faulkner* is published twice yearly by the Center for Faulkner Studies at Southeast Missouri State, Cape Girardeau.

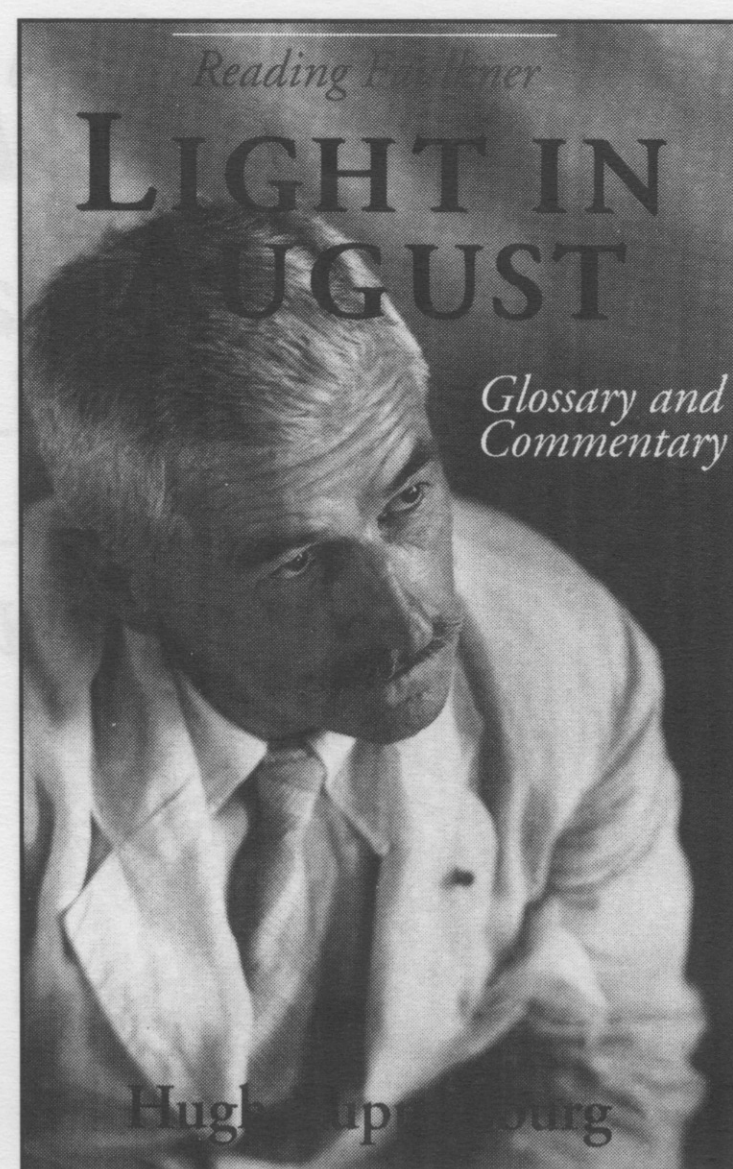
Toyama, Kiyoko. *Kotoba to Inochi (Words and Deeds)*. Tokyo: Yushodo Press Co. Ltd., 1994. Ms. Toyama, an assistant professor in the College of Culture and Communication of Tokyo Woman's Christian University, calls her volume "on Japanese literature by a Japanese Faulknerian, a record of struggle between two languages and two cultures."

Sartoris (1929), reading through to the final one, *The Reivers* (1962).

Faulkner got in trouble only when he stepped outside Yoknapatawpha, as in *A Fable* (1954). Read it in time, along with the first two novels, *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes*, written when he was still learning to write, and the others, *Pylon* and *The Wild Palms*.

Unless you just want to say that you've read every word of Faulkner, you can skip the poetry. Faulkner, calling himself a failed poet, said he

(Continued Page 3)



THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER
& Yoknapatawpha Review

William Boozer
Editor

Dean Faulkner Wells
and Lawrence Wells
Publishers

A quarterly publication copyright © 1995 by Yoknapatawpha Press Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. Editorial offices are at 739 Clematis Drive, Nashville, TN 37205, 615-356-5150. Subscription and advertising offices located at P.O. Box 248, Oxford, MS 38655, 601-234-0909. Subscription is \$12.50 for one year, \$22.50 for two years (\$15 and \$27.50 abroad). Advertising rates on request.

Pylon is Faulkner's Eulogy To Courage of Vanishing Breed

By W. KENNETH HOLDITCH

In 1909, a balloonist made a brief ascent over Oxford, then crashed into the chickenhouse in the backyard of Murry Falkner's house. It seems safe to say that from this experience, the first time that William Faulkner, who had just turned 12 the month before, had ever seen an airborne vehicle and rider, dates the future writer's love affair with flying. Soon he was reading about exploits of pioneering European and American aviators and filling his notebooks with skillful sketches of monoplanes and the daredevils who flew them.

By the time World War I was raging in Europe five years later, he had seen his first airplane and was reading with enthusiasm about the airwar in Europe. In 1918, he went to Canada to join the RAF, where he trained several months to be a fighter pilot, a dream brought to an abrupt and apparently, for him, annoying conclusion by the Armistice which ended the war.

After his return to Mississippi, he fabricated a daring flying history for himself with which he entertained his family and friends. Emily Stone recalled an incident in which he regaled her and other young girls of the town with his story of having crashed into a hangar, an account he concluded with the question, "Did you ever try to drink a bottle of whiskey hanging upside down in a hangar?" (In 1925 in New Orleans, he apparently convinced Sherwood Anderson, Anderson's wife and Anita Loos and others that such an accident had occurred and that as a result there was a metal plate in his head.)

Clearly, his interest in flying continued, although now, with the romantic exploits of the dogfights a thing of the past, he focused on the barnstorming pilots who had begun to give airshows around the country, a phenomenon he used as subjects in such short stories as "Honor" and "Death Drag."

By 1933, Faulkner, already an established novelist, had determined to learn

(Continued Page 4)

"A William Faulkner newsletter could easily be absolutely dreadful and pretentious. It is in your hands, readable plus being lively and informative..."

—Ben Wasson

"Faulkner Newsletter just arrived and I want to tell you what a fine job you've done with it. Difficult to do but you certainly did it!"

—Carvel Collins

From Yoknapatawpha Press
CELEBRATING THE 14TH YEAR OF CONTINUOUS PUBLICATION

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER
COLLECTED ISSUES

Edited by William Boozer, Dean Faulkner Wells
and Lawrence Wells

A collection of the first 54 issues • Jan. 1981 to Apr. 1994

Includes new Index • 232 pages, spiral bound
issued in a limited edition of 350 numbered copies

Price \$75.00 (subscription value \$157.50)

Yoknapatawpha Press, P.O. Box 248, Oxford, MS 38655

William Faulkner Foundation

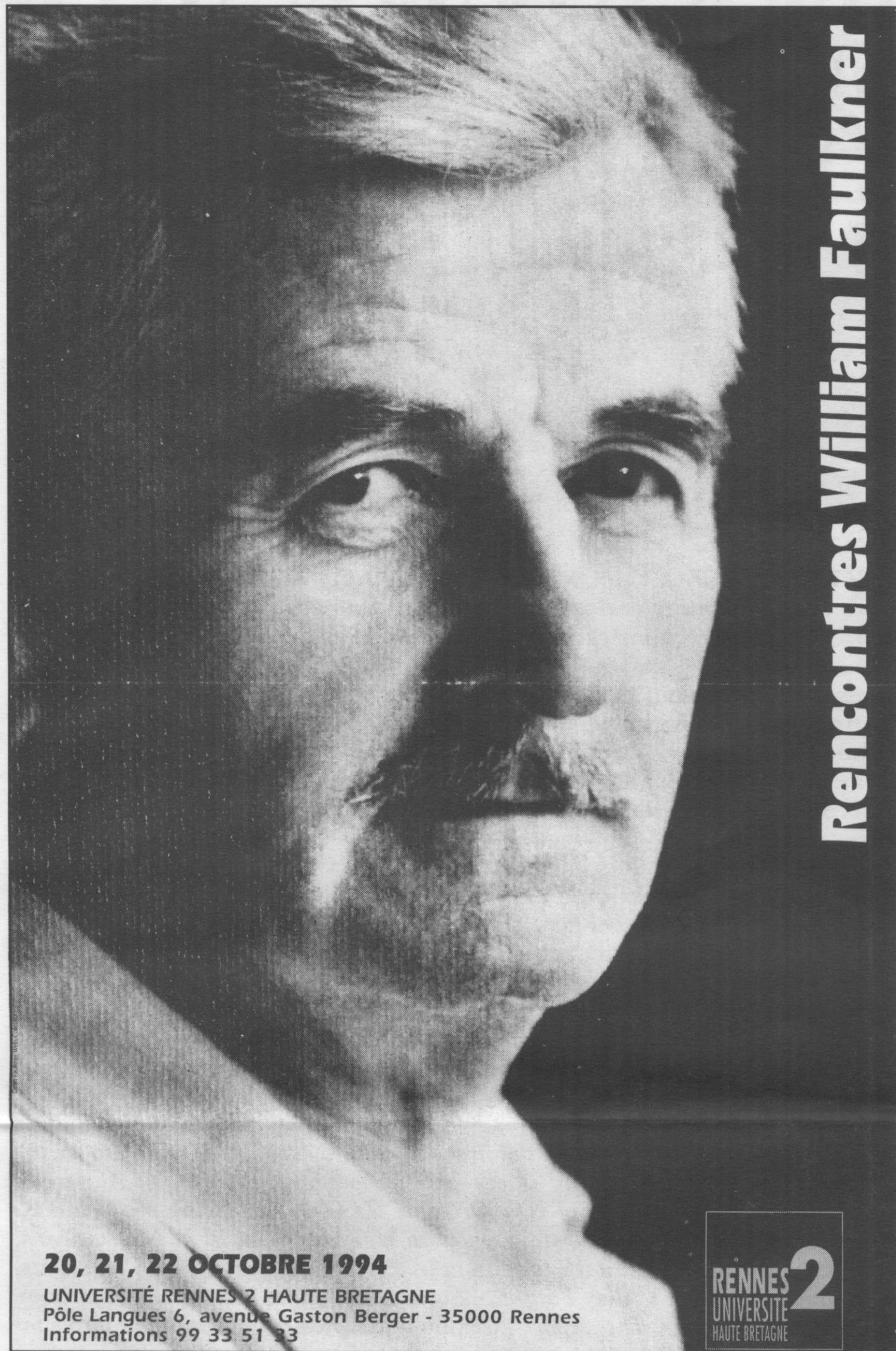


PHOTO OF FAULKNER made in March 1956 while a patient at Baptist Hospital in Memphis by one of his doctors, Richard C. Crowder, adorns a poster issued for last fall's Faulkner Festival sponsored by the new Faulkner Foundation France. Cutting the ribbon for a Research Center at the Foundation on the Villejean campus of Rennes 2 University was US Ambassador to France Pamela Harriman. Those in the group above were among participants in a three-day Faulkner Festival sponsored by the Foundation last October, during which the Research Center was formally opened.

New Foundation Launched

(From Page 1)

from Jackson, Miss., featuring Margaret Walker and Eudora Welty, and from Charlotte, N.C., with Josephine Humphreys and Elizabeth Spencer as speakers; readings by Richard Ford, Barry Hannah, Kaye Gibbons, Yusef Komunyakaa, James Emanuel, Trey Ellis and Teresa Kennedy; roundtable discussions on "Faulkner Today," directed by André Bleikasten, "Voices from the South," directed by Francois Pitavy, "Remembering Faulkner," and other topics; homage to Faulkner and Welty by Mario Vargas Llosa and Richard Ford; and a photo exhibition and screenings of films on which Faulkner worked.

Komunyakaa, the 1994 Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry, received the Foundation's William Faulkner Prize for 1994 in a presentation by Michel Fabre.

In addition to those named, speakers from the U.S. included authors and scholars Toni Morrison, Joseph Blotner, Noel Polk, Donald Kartiganer, Patrick Samway, Ben Forkner, Tom McHaney and John Matthews.

Dr. Nicole Moulinoux of Rennes 2, president of the Faulkner Foundation, in a report to *The Faulkner Newsletter* has told of current planning and forthcoming events for 1995 through the Faulkner Centenary in 1997.

Scholars from various European countries and the US joined last October in launching a new Research Center at the Foundation that will house facsimile manuscripts and concordances of Faulkner, as well as general information on Southern literature and culture.

The Foundation is already connected to the Internet system, Dr. Moulinoux reports, and by the end of this year the database will be in working order on the Rennes 2 University Library's documentary Server. At disposal of students, teachers and research members of the Foundation are Pro-Cite, Lexus-Nexus and CD-ROMS.

Foundation plans include a "Faulkner Springtime" this spring, a literary event that will feature publications of *Letters to Mother*, *Marionettes*, and, in May, Volume 2 of the *Pléiade* collec-

tion on Faulkner.

Also coming this spring will be a documentary about Faulkner produced by GEDEON and ordered by France Television as part of a series, "Un Siècle d'Écrivains" (A Century of Writers), directed by Bernard Rapp.

In addition, as part of "Faulkner Springtime," *Le Magazine Littéraire* has been asked to produce a special issue devoted to Faulkner and his work.

Among other publications planned for this year are:

- An issue of the journal *Autrement* that gathers unedited Faulkner works in a "Littératures" collection.

- A "William Faulkner Meetings" album that will collect and publish essays, poetry, articles and other work by writers, critics, translators and photographers.

- A workshop on "The Language of Faulkner" in September, offered by 10 linguists who this year are at work on "The Bear."

Projects planned for 1996 are:

- Creation of a "Professor at the William Faulkner Foundation" status after acceptance of holders by the American Embassy, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

- A European Research Seminar in September devoted to contemporary American studies, taught by Faulkner Foundation professors.

- Research by doctoral candidates from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* and by Robert Mullin, a Rotary scholar whose work at the Foundation from September 1995 to June 1996 has been arranged with the help of Donald Kartiganer of the University of Mississippi.

- Formation of a European Research Network focusing on Faulkner and other writers of the American South, in which the United Kingdom, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Belgium and Eastern European countries will be represented along with France.

Full particulars on the new Faulkner Foundation and its plans are available from the Foundation at Campus Rennes 2 Villejean, 6 avenue Gaston Berger, 35043 Rennes, France.

How, What To Read

(From Page 2)

wrote like he did because he couldn't write like Shakespeare and Shelley.

Failed poet or not, Faulkner was, in Malcolm Cowley's words, essentially not a novelist but an epic or bardic poet in prose, for all the weakness of his own poems. So on second thought, read the poems.

After all of that, you'll want to read the speeches, the interviews, letters, and biographies.

Let both Dorothy Tuck and Edmond Volpe take you by the hand if you get lost as I did and as my friend Ray Dickerson now is. There is fine help

also in the new "Reading Faulkner" series of glossaries and commentaries being published by the University Press of Mississippi that "explains" Faulkner's world for puzzled readers.

But don't quit on William Faulkner. A man who can write "Spotted Horses" and "The Bear" deserves to be read, beginning to end.

— William Boozier

(FN editor William Boozier is Book Beat columnist for the Nashville Banner, where an abbreviated version of this column first appeared. It is used here by permission.)

Pylon is Faulkner's Eulogy To Courage of Vanishing Breed

(From Page 2)

to fly and took lessons from Vernon Omlie, who with his wife Phoebe Omlie operated an aerial circus. In August of that year, the author had already purchased his own plane and soloed, and subsequently he began to take his wife, daughter, and other members of the family up for flights.

On 15 February 1934, Faulkner and Vernon Omlie flew from Memphis to New Orleans for an event that had created considerable excitement in Southern aviation circles: an airshow accompanying the opening of the Sushan Airport. The night before their arrival, one pilot had been killed in a daredevil stunt, and in subsequent events which Faulkner probably witnessed, two more men were to die.

The return to New Orleans and the French Quarter, in which he had lived in 1925 and 1926 and written his first two novels, must have been nostalgic for the author. He stayed with author Roark Bradford and his wife Mary Rose in their Creole cottage on Toulouse Street—always a home away from home for authors, Sinclair Lewis and John Steinbeck among others—and attended the airport events with another friend, Hermann Deutsch, who reported on the celebration for the old New Orleans *Item*. The powerful drama of the events of that week was not lost on Faulkner, and he must have returned to Oxford with a sense that he had witnessed the beginning of the end of the type of aviation that his friends the Omlies and other daredevils represented. For a while, however, the novelist continued to fly and in April 1934 even organized his own "Air Circus" for the entertainment and excitement of residents of North Mississippi.

The next year, on 10 November 1935, his youngest brother, Dean Swift Faulkner, was to die in the crash of a Waco plane the author had bought for him, leaving a young widow, Louise Hale Faulkner, carrying their only child, a daughter born four months after Dean's death and named for her father.

Less than a year after the Shushan Airport celebration, Faulkner had completed the first chapter of a new novel. Amazingly, it was only a little more than a month later, on 15 December, when the final chapters were in the hands of his New York editor, and on 25 March 1935, the work was published. The novel, named *Pylon* after the towers used to mark turns in an air race, was a thinly disguised recreation of the opening of the New Orleans airport and the people associated with it.

It was not the first time Faulkner had employed New Orleans as setting and inspiration. *Soldiers' Pay*, his first novel, was written at 624 Pirate's Alley in the French Quarter, where Faulkner House Books now commemorates the author and his work, and both his second novel, *Mosquitoes*, and *New Orleans Sketches*, a collection of the brief narratives published in *The Times-Picayune* in the 1920s, were written and set in the city.

Like *Pylon*, *Soldiers' Pay* is much concerned with aviation, for the shadowy and inactive center around whom all the action revolves is Donald Mahon, a pilot who is gravely wounded in France during World War I. Aviation also figures in Faulkner's third novel, first published as *Sartoris* and later bearing the author's preferred title, *Flags in the Dust*, in which John Sartoris dies when his plane is shot down by the Germans and his twin brother Bayard, also a pilot, survives the war but finally finds the death he has sought while flying a rented plane.

In *Pylon*, Faulkner changes the name of New Orleans to New Valois and utilizes a surreal method of narration that casts an other-worldly aura over plot, style, and character. The three major figures are two pilots and the wing-walking "wife" they share, whose lives and deeds to some extent reflect those of Vernon and Phoebe Omlie. The events surrounding the air show are seen through the eyes of an unnamed philosophical reporter who certainly shares some characteristics with Herman Deutsch.

The spider-like villain at the center of the evil web in the novel is a wealthy man named Feinman, loosely based on Abe Shushan, who in the 1930s was president of the agency that controlled the airport. Originally, every door handle in the main building contained an *S* to honor him, but when he was imprisoned shortly thereafter, his initial was removed from all of them.

Readers familiar with New Orleans will recognize local streets and sites, although some names have been changed, as well as the parade of the Krewe of Momus, one of the oldest carnival organizations in the city. Faulkner, retaining the influence of T. S. Eliot that had early served him well, employs "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" as a pattern for the novel, even quoting from the poem on several occasions.

By no means one of Faulkner's best novels—indeed, it is ranked rather low in the ratings of most scholars and fans—*Pylon* is of great interest for the true aficionado of his work, for it reflects one of the major interests of his life.

It represents as well a remarkable view of New Orleans from a writer for whom the city had meant a great deal in the past in terms of subject matter and inspiration.

Pylon's protagonists, like those of many of his other novels and stories, are outsiders, excluded from conformist society by their uniqueness, their peculiarity, or by actions which may be judged to be immoral or unacceptable by the majority.

Memory House Renovation



MEMORY HOUSE, the Oxford home of Dolly and John Faulkner, has undergone major interior and exterior renovation by its new owner, the University of Mississippi Foundation. The home, built in 1847 and located on three acres adjacent to the Ole Miss campus, is bounded on the south by Rowan Oak and on the east by the home of Stark Young. Funds for purchase of the home from James Faulkner and M.C. (Chooky) Falkner, sons of Dolly and John, were provided by Louis Brandt of Oxford and Houston, Texas, then president-elect of the University of Mississippi Foundation.

Finally, the book is a quaint, ironic, even somewhat satirical eulogy for all of those aviators, parachutists, and wing-walkers who with unbelievable bravado soared in flimsy, sometimes makeshift crafts and performed their death-defying (perhaps even death-inviting) deeds above wide-eyed and open-mouthed crowds in fairgrounds or cow pastures across the South, bringing into the generally uneventful rural lives an awesome excitement and entertainment.

Just such an excitement had taken hold of Billy Falkner in his youth, and in *Pylon* he paid what might be called his last respects to the almost superhuman courage of that disappearing breed.

(W. Kenneth Holditch received the first Ph.D. in English to be awarded by the University of Mississippi and is currently Research Professor of American Literature at the University of New Orleans. He edits the Tennessee Williams Journal and was a founder of the Tennessee Williams Festival in New Orleans. Currently he is involved with the Tennessee Williams Festival in Clarksdale, Miss., and the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society, and gives literary walking tours of the French Quarter. This report on *Pylon* is adapted from a paper he wrote for The Double Dealer Redux.)

FAULKNER FIRST EDITIONS

Bought and Sold — Want Lists Welcome

Choctaw Books • 926 North Street • Jackson, MS 39202
601-352-7281

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER
& Yoknapatawpha Review

P.O. Box 248, Oxford, Mississippi 38655

U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Bulk Rate Postage
PERMIT NO. 8
OXFORD, MS 38655

John D. Williams Librarian
Serials Section
Univ. of Mississippi
University, MS 38677