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Ruel E. Foster

Jim Dees

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THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER

& Yoknapatawpha Review

Vol. XVIII, No. 4

October–December 1998

A Checklist

Two New Faulkner Studies

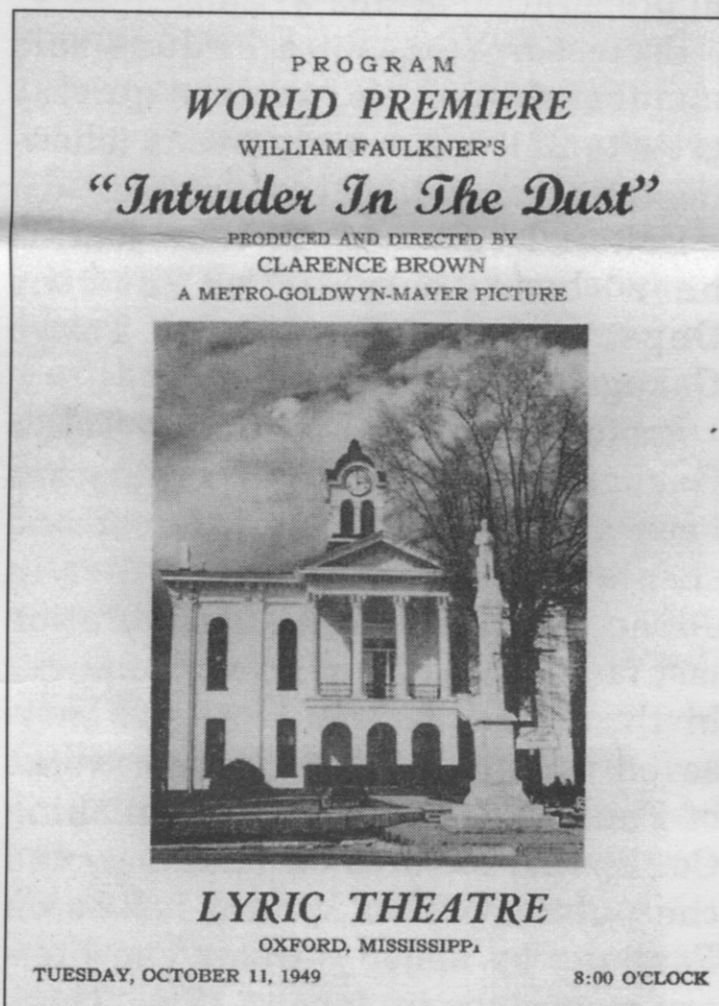
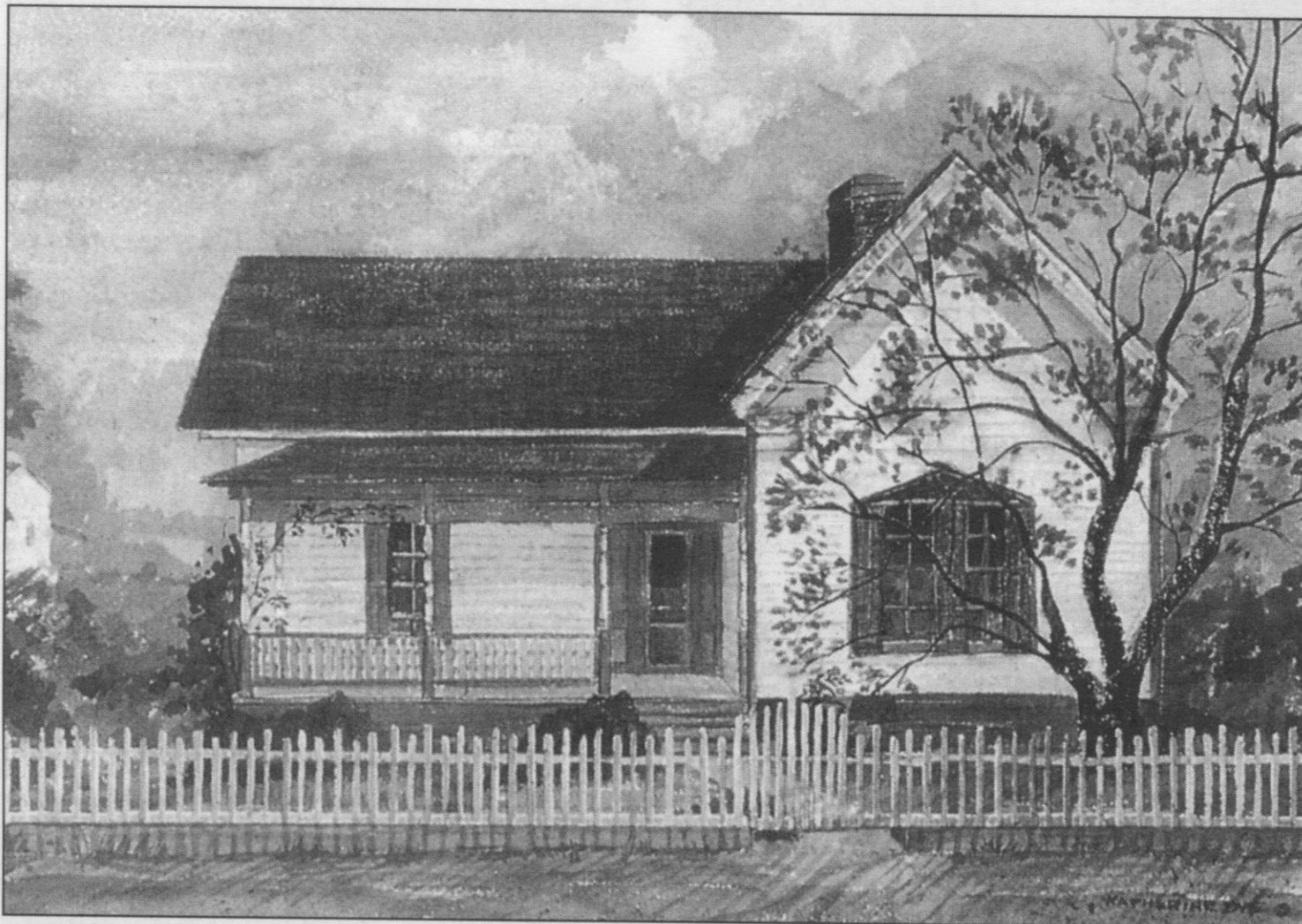
A new Faulkner study by Doreen Fowler headlines the new Checklist of Faulkner-related publications, along with papers read at the 1995 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference on the theme of "Faulkner in Cultural Context."

Faulkner in Cultural Context, Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie, eds. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. Papers presented at the 1995 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference at the University of Mississippi by Don H. Doyle, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Kevin Railey, Dawn Trouard, Warwick Wadlington, Gena McKinley, John T. Matthews, Cheryl Lester, Peter Alan Froehlich, Neil Schmitz, Charles Hannon, and Sacvan Bercovitch. The theme of the 22nd annual F&Y Conference and title of this collection of papers, Professor Kartiganer writes in the Introduction here, "encapsulates the changes of the last decade in the way we read Faulkner. Clearly there has been a major shift in focus, one that has led us to incorporate into our interpretations of Faulkner's texts the various contexts that surround them—the historical, political, economical, social, ideological, and aesthetic conditions that were contemporary with Faulkner's creation of those texts—as well as those contexts that are contemporary with our reading of them: this later concern a natural consequence of the conviction that no one, neither author nor critic, is free from the contextual impact." xvi + 316 pp. \$50 cloth; \$22 softcover.

Fowler, Doreen. *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997. In this first book-length Lacanian reading of Faulkner, Fowler draws on Jacques Lacan and other theorists and employs a feminist psychoanalytic methodology in assessing symbolic meanings of race and gender in what she calls Faulkner's greatest novels—*The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *Go Down, Moses*. Fowler is professor of English at the University of Mississippi and a visiting professor at the University of

(Continued Page 4)

Centennial Exhibition



AMONG HOLDINGS in the Faulkner Collections at the University of Mississippi Libraries which are included in "A Faulkner 100: The Centennial Exhibition" and pictured in the exhibit's catalogue is the Katherine Dye watercolor above of the New Albany, Miss., house in which Faulkner was born. The house no longer stands. The 100 exhibit items include a program for the Oct. 11, 1949, world premiere of "Intruder in the Dust" at Oxford's Lyric Theatre, and the May 1925 *Scream*, Ole Miss humor magazine, with three Faulkner drawings.

Ole Miss Special Collections Honored Faulkner With Centennial Exhibition

Notable among the 1997 observances of the Faulkner centennial, one which drew special attention through the 25th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference in July of this year, was an exhibition in Special Collections at University of Mississippi Libraries that dramatized the wealth of Faulkner holdings on deposit on his home turf at Ole Miss.

Organizing the exhibition and overseeing its extended run to this fall was Thomas M. Verich, university archivist, who selected for exhibit 100 items unique to the Ole Miss collection.

Verich also authored the catalogue for the exhibit, "A Faulkner 100: The Centennial Exhibition," published in 500 numbered copies, a treasure of infor-

(Continued Page 2)

A Retrospective

Faulkner Studies Pioneer Recalls The Beginning

By RUEL E. FOSTER

A few months ago a Faulkner bibliographer noted in an article that books published on Faulkner were edging toward the phenomenal number of 600. This vast cathedral of books is buttressed with innumerable articles, Master's theses and doctoral dissertations. There seems to be no parallel in the English language to the current fascination with Faulkner.



Ruel E. Foster

The Campbell and Foster volume, *William Faulkner, A Critical Appraisal*, appeared in 1951 as the first trickle in what has now become a vast torrent. As co-author of the above book, I have been asked by the editors of *The Faulkner News-*

letter for a few program notes on one small phase of that reputation.

Around 1948 Professor Harry M. Campbell and I made tentative plans for a book on Faulkner. Many of our colleagues pooh-poohed the idea. By 1944 Faulkner had published seventeen books, including his five greatest novels, but not one of them was effectively in print. Only two of them were listed in the immense catalogue of the New York Public Library. Scribner's influential editor, Maxwell Perkins, had quietly observed, "Faulkner is finished." There was no bull market in Faulkner's stock. Should we devote two years to a book on a fading author ("fading," if we were to believe the critics) and sink as his reputation sank?

Countering this dismal view was the appearance of Malcolm Cowley's book, *The Portable Faulkner* with its fine introductory essay. We liked it. We had also the prophetic words of our perceptive Professor at Vanderbilt University, Donald Davidson. We

(Continued Page 3)

Ole Miss Special Collections Honored Faulkner With Centennial Exhibition

(From Page 1)

mation on Faulkner and the Faulkner family as far back as Faulkner's great-grandfather, the Old Colonel William Clark Falkner.

The catalogue opens with an April 29, 1861, letter from the Old Colonel, on



Falkner & Falkner, Attorneys at Law, letterhead from Ripley, Miss., to a Capt. H. R. Miller, expressing displeasure over the dispersal of some companies from Falkner's Confederate regiment. "A Faulkner 100" concludes with a tribute to Faulkner by Gabriel García Márquez.

"One goal of the exhibition was to select printed materials unique to the University of Mississippi's collections," Verich writes in an Introduction to the catalogue. "Another aim was to choose pieces that relate to the city of Oxford, to the extended Faulkner family, and especially to Faulkner's association with The University of Mississippi."

Included in the exhibit and described and pictured in the catalogue are previously unpublished Faulkner poems, photographs, art-

work, signed documents, and illustrated ephemera that, in Verich's words, "are graphically appealing as well as intrinsically interesting."

In black-and-white and color photographs or in text, the catalogue pictures and describes such collectibles as a 1984 Merani printing in Tbilisi of *The Sound and the Fury*, its "distinctive Georgian script together with the illustrated cover" suggesting "not so much a Yoknapatawpha setting as an extraterrestrial one"; Faulkner's contributions to Ole Miss publications; William Alexander Percy's copy of *Soldiers' Pay*, with Percy's bookplate; Shelby Foote's copy of the first London printing of *Pylon*, signed "Shelby D. Foote/England June 44," from the Carl Petersen collection; correspondence from Malcolm Cowley to Faulkner and from Faulkner in Hollywood to his mother in Oxford; and posters of movies on which Faulkner worked while in Hollywood.

The final item in the catalogue pictures García Márquez's contribution, "Faulkner, Escritor del Caribe," in Spanish. Laid in, in the catalogue, is a broadside with English translation of García Márquez's contribution.

"Ever since my first readings of Faulkner when I was twenty—*Sanctuary* and *Light in August*—he has seemed to me a Caribbean writer," García Márquez writes. "This became even more apparent when I attempted to describe the ambiance and distinguishing features of Macondo, and I had to make a great effort so that they would not resemble Faulkner's creations."

The most difficult thing for an honorable writer, he goes on, "is not imitating the authors one admires but rather exactly the opposite; learning how not to imitate them." Locating the fictional lands of Yoknapatawpha and Macondo, in Verich's words, "on the same cultural and geographic map," García Márquez concludes his tribute by stating that it was Faulkner who taught him "how to decipher" his own demons of the Caribbean.

Verich in his Introduction acknowledges Leila Clark Wynn of Greenville, Miss., as a generous donor to Special Collections and the sponsor responsible for "A Faulkner 100."

In further celebration of the Faulkner centennial, the University of Alabama's Book Arts Program and Special Collections at Ole Miss jointly issued a previously unpublished sonnet by Faulkner, "New Orleans," in an edition of 100 numbered broadsides encased in wrappers bearing a commentary by Guy Davenport. The poem was dated by Faulkner at Oxford on 30 October 1924. Providing an illustration for the broadside is artist John Scott. The designer-printer is Steve Miller.

Davenport writes that the sonnet "must have been removed, despite its technical mastery, from *The Marble Faun*... as insufficiently Eliotian and Poundian... This sonnet of 1924 displays Faulkner's willingness to write gorgeously. That he did not publish it is evidence enough that he suspected that it wasn't wholly *his*. A deep and abiding tradition had written it."

"New Orleans" is now in the Wynn Faulkner Poetry Collection in Special Collections at Ole Miss.

The Verich catalogue is \$23 postpaid. It is available, as are particulars on the limited printing of "New Orleans," from Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries, University, MS 38677.

New Faulkner Society Formed In Japan

A new William Faulkner Society of Japan was organized at a gathering of about 120 scholars in Kyoto in May. Announced at that organizational meeting were plans for publishing a *William Faulkner Journal* each March and a conference each fall beginning with a symposium at Hiroshima in October.

Elected president of the new society was Kenzaburo Ohashi, professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo. Hisao Tanaka, chairman of the Department of English and professor of American literature at Hiroshima University, was named vice president. Noboru Yamashita of Soai University in Osaka was elected secretary.

The new *Faulkner Journal* will be available in Japanese in a print edition and in English on the Internet. Contributions in English will be translated into Japanese and published in the print edition. Contributions in English which are accepted for publication may be read on the World Wide Web on the society's new Home Page, in preparation at this writing.

Professor Yamashita in June said membership in the society quickly grew to 221 in the early weeks following the organizational conference.

Editorial offices for the new journal have been established at the Department of English at Tokyo Gakugei University.

Professor Ikuko Fujihira of Tokyo Gakugei said the last half century has been a time of growing interest and scholarship in Faulkner studies in Japan, "culminating in a celebration last fall of the centennial of Faulkner's birth, the completion of the twenty-seven volumes of the complete works of Faulkner by Fuzambo Publishing Co., special lectures on Faulkner, and the publication of special issues on Faulkner by major journals and literary magazines in Japan." (See "These Japanese Events Marked Faulkner at

THE FAULKNER NEWSLETTER
& Yoknapatawpha Review

William Boozer

Editor

Dean Faulkner Wells
and Lawrence Wells

Publishers

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Children in Softcover

Publication of a new softcover edition of Noel Polk's *Children of the Dark House: Text and Context in Faulkner* has been announced by the University Press of Mississippi. The work was initially published in hardback in 1996. The softcover edition is priced at \$18 and may be ordered from the publisher at 1-800-737-7788.

100," in *FN*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, April-June 1998.)

"The year 1998 marks the beginning of a new era in Faulkner studies with establishment of the William Faulkner Society of Japan. Our society aims to encourage and promote Faulkner studies not just in Japan but in the whole of the Asian-Pacific region, and especially among young scholars."

Persons interested in submitting contributions in English to the new *William Faulkner Journal* may obtain a copy of "Notes for Contributors" from Professor Fujihira at Tokyo Gakugei University, Koganei, Tokyo, 184-8501 Japan; tel/fax 81-(0)42-329-7263; e-mail fujihira@u-gakugei.ac.jp. Deadline for submission of contributions to each issue will be November 15 each year. The special topic for the first issue of the *Journal* will be "Faulkner and World Literature."

How to Enter the Jack Daniels Faux Faulkner Contest

- Send a typed, double-spaced parody (500-word limit) to: Faux Faulkner, P.O. Box 248, Oxford, MS 38655.
- The parody should exhibit a grasp of Faulkner's style, syntax and subjects; in general, a successful parodist presents a witty story, dramatic situation or dilemma.
- Deadline for the 1999 Jack Daniels Faux Faulkner Contest is Feb. 1, 1999.
- Entrants may submit more than one entry; those desiring confirmation of receipt must send a self addressed postcard; only the winner and semi-finalists will be notified.
- By entering the contest, entrants automatically release publication and promotion rights to their parody to the contest sponsors.
- For more information, visit our website at: <http://www.watervalley.net/yoknapatawphapress/index.htm>

Pioneer in Faulkner Studies Recalls the Beginning

(From Page 1)

admired Davidson's critical acumen. He argued cogently that Faulkner was a great but difficult writer, and he would have to create his own audience. It would take time. We went with Davidson.

So in the summer of 1949, I found myself at the University of Mississippi teaching American Literature and working with Harry Campbell on Faulkner. We were soon joined by Carvel Collins, who was at that time an Assistant Professor at Harvard University. Carvel was far ahead of us in his study of Faulkner's life. He had met both Faulkner and Phil Stone in 1948 and was making extensive notes for his forthcoming Faulkner biography. The company of Duell, Sloan and Pearce would publish his biography and had already paid him an advance of \$500. Carvel was handsome, congenial and tireless. We three were scheduled to present, in September, the first section devoted to Faulkner in the history of the Modern Language Association. So we met after our classes each day and endlessly analyzed and commented on each other's papers. There was a great intellectual joy as we quartered back and forth through the Faulkner canon. It was a wonderful time to be working in Faulkner. There were no handbooks, no book-length critical studies. There was "A faire field full of Faulkner folke" moved by a master hand. I thought of Wordsworth's lines:

Bliss was it then to be alive

But to be young was very heaven,
and so it was then.

Two people in Oxford were of special help. Faulkner's long time friend and mentor, Phil Stone, invited us to his backyard at his "little house" for bourbon and Faulkner talk. He was a gracious host along with his wife, Emily Whitehurst Stone. We were surprised at his querulous tone when he spoke of Faulkner. Faulkner, he said, was often like an old-time Negro preacher who gets going "in the spirit" and doesn't know what he's saying. Faulkner had been a good student as long as he had listened to Stone, but he left Phil and wrote *The Sound and the Fury* on his own. Phil felt that Faulkner had written all of his best work and was now written out (we know now that Stone was right about this). Phil was much hurt that Faulkner had not helped Emily Stone get her novels published. Several times he said - "Emily is the best unpublished author in the United States." From time to time Phil's son, ten-year-old Philip Alston Stone appeared, usually lugging a book. "That boy takes five or six books a week from the library. He's read half of what they have on Astronomy and Astro-Physics." He was obviously very proud of his precocious son.

In 1949 we lived across the street from John Faulkner, Will's brother.

Several times I walked over to his big house with the detached kitchen and talked with him. He was courteous and slow spoken. He told me a good bit about the early days of the Faulkner family but would not speak directly of Will's work. He was a great raconteur in the style of the old southern frontier humor of George Washington Harris.

Carvel, aided by a book he had written on horses, had already met Faulkner and established good relations with him. Carvel had also met Phil Stone and was in the process of becoming one of his top three correspondents. So with a base in Oxford we moved on to Stanford and the Modern Language Association.

We arrived in San Francisco two days early and met several times to point up our papers and anticipate hostile questions. A perennial gripe from our adversaries was Faulkner's torturous style. We dealt with that by adopting Mark Twain's witticism - "The music of Wagner is not as bad as it sounds." With us this became "Faulkner's prose is not as bad as it sounds," which became our in-joke to relieve the tedium of the day.

Our session at Stanford was in the afternoon in a large hall, agreeably full for a writer who was supposed to be going down the slippery slope. I began the program with a paper on Faulkner's humor with generous swatches from *The Hamlet* and *Sanctuary* which the audience found laughable.

Campbell followed with a weighty paper on Faulkner's thought, "The Myth of Cosmic Pessimism." This generated a good bit of to-and-fro debate. Collins closed out the session with a biographical essay (as I remember) remarkably rich in detail, since Faulkner was already notorious for his secretiveness about his personal life.

Collins went on to devote the rest of his life to amassing a vast file of biographical data, rivaled only by the collection of Joseph Blotner, the official biographer of Faulkner. Tragically, Collins died without ever publishing his biography. Scholars, however, for many years to come will delve deeply into that biographical treasure and bless his name.

Harry and Carvel are dead now, but the vast Faulkner machine moves on remorselessly. I alone am the literary Ishmael left to tell their tale. For me still are their pleasant voices awake, as is the brief moment we spent enhancing the lasting reputation of an extraordinary writer.

(Dr. Foster is Benedum professor of American Literature emeritus at West Virginia University. His other books include *Jesse Stuart*, in *Twayne's United States Authors Series*.)



NEWCOMER to the William Faulkner family plot in St. Peter's Cemetery in Oxford is the "ET" marker at top left. Faulkner's grave is at lower right, alongside that of Mrs. Faulkner. At lower left, next to "ET," is the grave of Malcolm Franklin, Mrs. Faulkner's son from her first marriage.

— Photos by Bruce Newman, *The Oxford Eagle*

Who, What Is That in Faulkner Family Plot? Let Us Know if You Find Out

By JIM DEES

"My idea is, a tombstone in a public cemetery is set up as a true part of the record of a community." — William Faulkner in a letter to nephew Jimmy Faulkner, May or June 1961 (from *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*).

The heat was thicker than in Hell's laundry room when the phone rang and I broke a sweat just lifting the receiver.

"Make it cool," I said.

"Who's that buried in Faulkner's grave? Who dat?"

"What?"

"Who dat buried in Faulkner's grave? Who dat? Who dat? Go to the cemetery.

There's an unknown stone in the Faulkner plot. It's ET." Click.

The bank clock in my brain was flashing 103 degrees at 100 per cent humidity while the insane refrain continued to reverberate through my ears. *Who dat? Who dat?* Like an off color joke told by a tour guide in a sacred tomb.

Mr. Faulkner was buried in Oxford's St. Peter's Cemetery on July 7, 1962, another

scorcher, if you believe novelist William Styron. The 37-year-old author of *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, was dispatched here to cover Faulkner's funeral for *Life* magazine. While at Rowan Oak, looking over the bookshelves with Shelby Foote, Styron was delighted to find a copy of his novel there among Faulkner's personal reading. His story appeared in *Life* three weeks after the burial: "The heat is like a small mean death itself, as if one were being smothered to extinction in a damp woolen overcoat."

Most days, St. Peter's Cemetery is as quiet as a secret. The serenity roars down the long aisles of graves, many weathered from a century of just being there. Even on a day hot enough to drown out all thinking, one is aware of the history and the sacrifice here.

This is an interracial cemetery. The area set aside years ago as the "black section" has lost its boundaries through the living and dying. Now this manicured but still inexorably rolling hillside is the great equalizer. Here lie heroes and haints, conquerors and concubines, choirboys and bootleggers, bank presidents and bait shop proprietors, and just plaintownsfolk, amassed quietly together in a harmony that would have been impossible while their tongues were still working. Strange grave fellows sharing an earned rest from their tumultuous lives.

Mississippi hero and Grover Cleveland's Supreme Court Justice appointee,

(Continued Page 4)

Who, What in Faulkner Family Plot?

(From Page 3)

L.Q.C. Lamar, is here. David Sansing, Mississippi's preeminent historian, told me that Lamar was one of the few Confederates who was able to have a career both before and after the Civil War.

"He was on the faculty at Ole Miss before the War. He was ambassador to Russia during the War, and after the War he was elected to the U.S. Senate," Sansing said. "Cleveland appointed him Secretary of the Interior, then appointed him to the Supreme Court."

"You know who else is out there? Jacob Thompson, who was also Secretary of the Interior. Oxford has the distinction of having produced two Secretaries of Interior."

I told Sansing of the strange call and the strange refrain, "Who dat buried in Faulkner's grave?"

"That is weird," he said. "Let me know what you find out."

And of course, Nobel prize winner William Faulkner is buried in St. Peter's as are his books. Many of the real people that appear as characters in his fiction are all around him. His beloved friend and caretaker Caroline Barr (Dilsey) is here. Faulkner held her funeral in his parlor at Rowan Oak and then wrote her epitaph himself, "Her white children bless her."

Barr endured and prevailed; not only as a model for one of the great characters in literature but her actual life: she was born into slavery and died free.

Faulkner's plot was one of the first in the then "new" section, just down the hill from the older section where his brother John is buried with the famous two spellings of Faulkner - with the "u" and without. Since William Faulkner's burial on that oppressive July day, his wife Estelle has joined him, as well as Estelle's son, Malcolm, and a fourth empty space.

Who dat?

The call to warms. It's probably hotter now than in '62, right? Global warming and all that. A new stone in the Faulkner plot? That's hot. A mystery perhaps leading to nocturnal grave tamperers? The Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers' Pay?

It seems heat and mystery and grief have been as rich a part of the legacy of William Faulkner as his long sweaty sentences and "touchable reality."

That he died in July seems Faulknerian. Biographer Joseph Blotner flew to the funeral from Virginia with Faulkner's daughter Jill and felt the desolation when heat and grief meet. He referred to her "more than ordinary tears of grief, keen and bitter with a double sense of loss."

"There was nothing to say to grief like hers..."

And then, amid the "shimmering heat waves of the Oxford airport," the "sweating taxi driver said it had been ninety-five yesterday and it was even hotter today."

Thirty-six years later, I called Jill Faulkner Summers, now a happy grandmother in the horse country of Virginia, and discovered that "ET" was also a mystery to her.

"No," she said. "Those initials mean nothing to me. I know nothing about the matter. I would have to really think about it to see if those initials mean anything to me," she said about who - or what - might be spending eternity next to her father.

Then she added, "But if you find out, would you let me know?"

I spoke to city officials, cemetery record keepers and the local funeral homes. No dice on ET.

Dean Faulkner Wells, niece of the author, who by most biographical accounts was raised like a daughter by him following the plane crash death of her father, William's brother Dean, was likewise in the dark.

"It's probably the ashes of an old war hero buddy of Jimmy's," Dean said, referring to her cousin Jimmy who has moved into the patriarchal role of the living Faulkners.

Dean remembers airplanes playing havoc with Malcolm's burial.

"They put his casket on the wrong flight and he went to St. Louis," she remembered.

"We waited all day for him. We waited and waited and had Bloody Marys and got pretty drunk. It's hard to pace yourself when you're waiting on a casket."

Malcolm's body eventually arrived and was buried in his spot. He had that end of the plot to himself all these years until the arrival of ET.

"The Extra-Terminal," offers Dean's husband, Larry. "Can you imagine if someone plopped down into Tolstoy's grave? Don't you think the Russians would have dug him up?"

"Let us know what you find out," he adds.

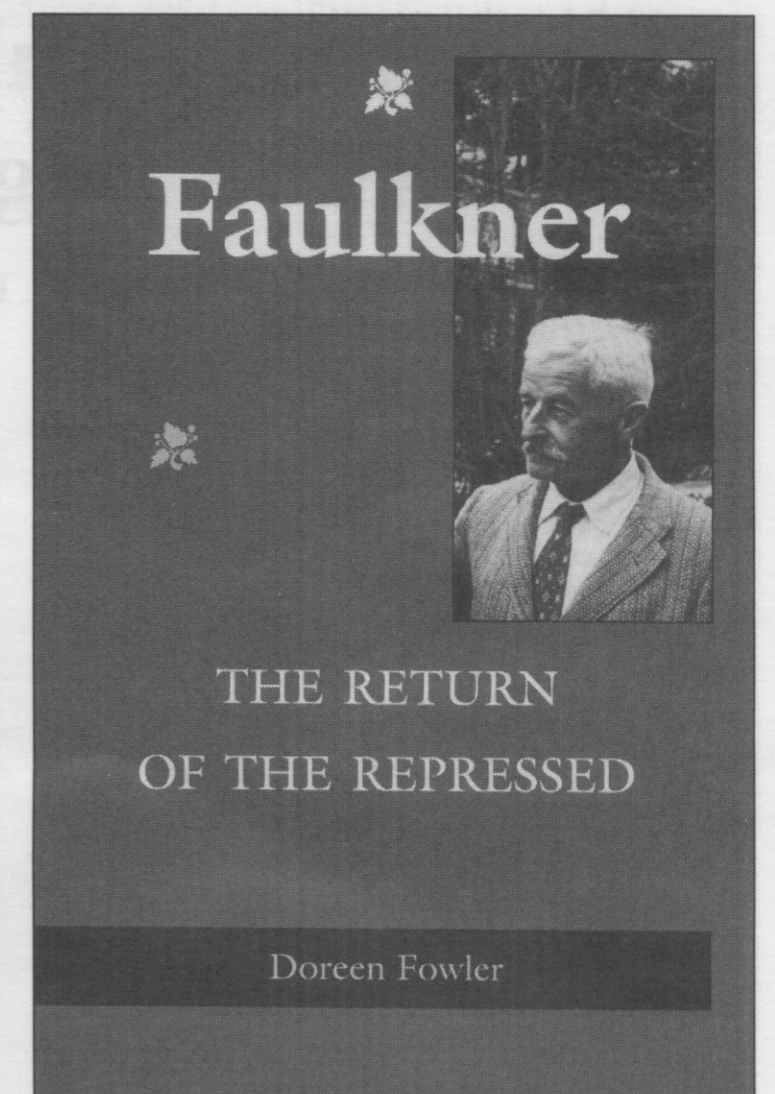
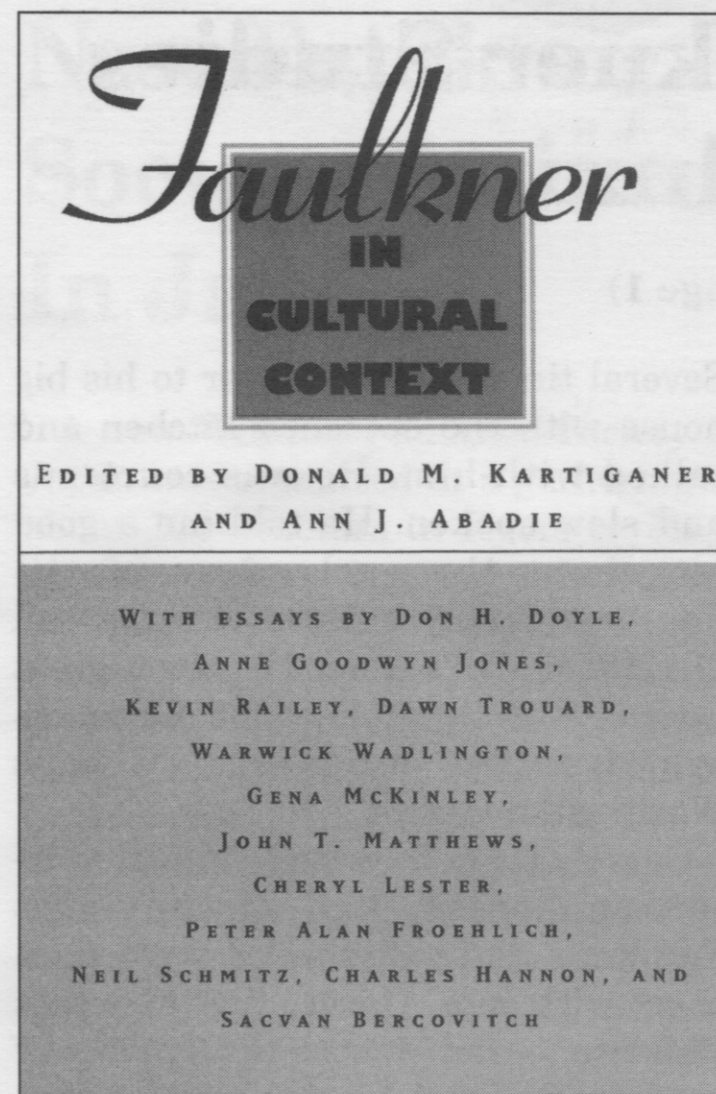
"Brother Will didn't like air conditioning; there's one air conditioner in the house, and it's in Aunt Estelle's room." — Jimmy Faulkner to Sally Wolff in *Talking About William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

I called Jimmy Faulkner, knowing that he knew and also knowing that he wasn't going to tell.

"Wait a minute," he said when he answered the phone, "let me cut off the air conditioner so I can hear you."

"Mr. Faulkner, I don't mean to pry into your family's business but y'all said Mr. William Faulkner belonged to the family until you buried him then you said he belongs to the world. Could you tell me who ET is?"

"I'm honor-bound not to tell," Faulkner said.



Checklist

(From Page 1)

Kansas. Her other work includes *Faulkner's Changing Vision: From Outrage to Affirmation* (UMI Research Press). With Ann J. Abadie, she has edited a number of volumes of papers read at the annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. xxii + 215 pp. \$35.

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"It's not a hunting dog is it?"

"It's who it says it is, 'An old family friend who came home to rest with us.'"

"How old is the stone? One of the maintenance men told me it had been there about six months."

"Oh I suspect it's eight or nine or 10,000 years old. It's stone." He chuckled.

"You're not going to tell me, are you?"

"That's the best I can do. May I cut on my air conditioner now?"

Who, what, or if ET is will likely come out at some point, but not for my purposes now. And maybe that's an admirable thing.

In this millennium of Info-Overdrive maybe the world needs more data you just can't get at. Tell Jimmy Faulkner a secret, and swear him to honor, and it's refreshing to know that that bit of information will never see the light of day.

Honor's not a word people use in conversation much anymore. I can appreciate honor. But it means the hot trail's gone cold and maybe this secret will go with Jimmy to his grave.

But let me know if you find out.

(This "High Heat on the Mystery Index" report by Jim Dees appeared in the July 23-29 issue of Oxford Town, a weekly supplement to The Oxford Eagle. It is excerpted here and used by permission.)

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